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JAMES FRASER, LAIRD OF BREA

—Probed many hearts, beginning with his own.

Yea, this man's brow, like to a title-leaf,
Foretells the nature of a tragic volume:
Thou tremblest, and the whiteness in thy cheek
Is apter than thy tongue to tell thine errand.
Even such a man
Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night.

JAMES FRASER

LAIRD OF BREA

PARISH MINISTER OF CULROSS

BASS ROCK, BLACKNESS, AND NEWGATE PRISONER, AND AUTHOR OF 'THE BOOK OF THE INTRICACIES OF MY HEART AND LIFE'

By ALEXANDER WHYTE, D.D., LL.D.

PRINCIPAL OF NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH

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JAMES FRASER, LAIRD OF BREA

I

INTRODUCTORY

THE religious literature of Scotland is remarkably rich in books of religious autobiography. Telling us each one his own spiritual story we have James Melville, and Robert Blair, and John Livingstone, and Alexander Brodie, and James Fraser, and Thomas Halyburton, and Thomas Boston, and Hugh Miller, and John Duncan, and William Taylor, and Andrew Bonar. And there are not a few fragments of the same kind quite worthy to stand beside those full and finished works; such as the autobiographical remains of the Lady Coltness, the Lady Anne Elcho, and Marion Veitch. Every one of those famous autobiographies has its own individuality, idiosyncrasy, and physiognomy; and each several one of them makes its own special contribution to the noblest catalogue of the books of our native land. I know something of all those great books; but there is none of them that draws me and holds me and keeps possession of me like the *Memoirs of Sir James Fraser of Brea, written by Himself.* Dr. Jowett, writing to Lady

Airlie, said that he had just finished Boswell for the fiftieth time, and Mr. Spurgeon was wont to say that he had read Bunyan a hundred times. I shall not attempt to count up the times I have read James Fraser of Brea, but if I did I feel sure that I would run both Jowett and Spurgeon hard.

Dr. Aird of Creich has collected the chief facts of Fraser's life into a short biographical sketch which will be found prefixed to the Inverness edition of Fraser's autobiography. And Dr. Elder Cumming of Glasgow has an admirable appreciation of Fraser in his *Holy Men of God*. The following are the main outlines of Fraser's much-tried life. He was born at Brea, his father's estate in Ross-shire, on the 29th of July 1639. His father died while his son James was still a child, and some of his greatest troubles in life came to him out of his ownership of that estate. Although he began to study for the legal profession, young Fraser eventually gave himself up to the study of divinity, to which study he brought a mind of the first intellectual order. From his earliest days the Laird of Brea identified himself with the outed evangelical ministers of the north, and all along he was a most pronounced Presbyterian and Covenanter, and both by his tongue and by his pen he fought unflinchingly for the freedom of his Church and his country. Both in the Bass and in Blackness and in Newgate he suffered the most unjust imprisonment, and the wickedest and the most malicious ill-usage. After the Revolution we find Fraser settled as parish minister of Culross, where he

closed his troubled career about the year 1698. Dr. Aird adds this note to his short sketch of Fraser's life: 'He was assisted at a communion at Culross, very shortly before his death, by the celebrated Boston of Ettrick, then a young man.'

But with all that it is in his *Memoirs of Himself* that James Fraser of Brea will live, and he will live in that remarkable book as long as a scholarly religion, and an evangelical religion, and a spiritual religion, and a profoundly experimental religion lives in his native land. In saying that I do not forget the warning that Dr. Elder Cumming gives me to the effect that Fraser's will be a Scottish reputation only, and even that will be limited to readers of a special cast of religious experience and spiritual sympathy. At the same time, Dr. Elder Cumming adds that Fraser's autobiography is a book that for depth and for grip has few, if any, equals among the foremost books of its kind in the whole world.

Now you will naturally ask me at this point just what it is that gives James Fraser such a high rank as a spiritual writer, and just what it is that so signalises his *Memoirs of Himself*. Well, in his own characteristic words his Memoirs is 'the book of the intricacies of his own heart and life,' and that on their purely spiritual side. Fraser's mind was by nature of the most intricate kind—that is to say, his mind was naturally of the most acute and subtle and penetrating and searching-out kind. Had he gone into law, as at one time he intended to do, he would infallibly have taken rank as one of

the acutest of our Scottish lawyers. And with his immense industry he would to a certainty have left writings behind him that would have been of classical authority in that great profession. But to the lasting enrichment of his own soul, and to the lasting enrichment of all his kindred-minded readers' souls, Fraser was led of God into divinity, and into divinity of the deepest, acutest, most evangelical, and most experimental kind. 'I chose divinity,' says Butler, 'it being of all studies the most suitable to a reasonable nature.'

Unhappily for us, many of Fraser's private journals, family papers, and estate documents are hopelessly lost. But if ever they are recovered I feel sure it will be found that he had made out more than once a most exact map and inventory of his inherited estate with his own exact and intricate hands. I can see the delineaments and the depictments of the whole estate of Brea as they were laid down by the honestest, and the exactest, and the intricatest of pens. I can see its hills and its glens, its farms and its crofts, its streams and its lochs, its cattle and its game and its fish, and all laid down with a mathematical exactness and a geometrical completeness as if he were preparing his estate for the Inverness or Edinburgh market; and as if he was determined to do so with the most absolute justice both to the seller and the buyer. Now whether those maps and plans and accompanying documents are ever recovered or no, most happily we have some still more important documents preserved to us from Fraser's faithful and

careful hands. I refer to the delineations he made of the inward estate of his own soul: a delineation and an inventory that has been preserved to us to this day, I will say, under the special and adorable providence of Fraser's God and our God. And it is an analysis and a delineation and a depictment of such a kind that I know nothing to approach it in any language that I read. And I thank God every day that so intricate and so spiritual a book is not in Hebrew or Greek or Latin, but is in my own Scottish tongue wherein I was born. Fraser describes his spiritual autobiography as 'The Book of the Intricacies of his own Heart and Life.' And so it is. It is a book of such intricacy and sinuosity and complication and reticulation and involution, that in all my experience of such books it stands simply unparalleled and unapproached. No labyrinth ever constructed by the brain of man comes near the heart of Brea. Not even that wonder of the world the labyrinth of Egypt with its three thousand secret chambers. Not even the Cretan labyrinth of Daedalus with its blood-thirsty monster at its centre, and with only a thin linen thread to lead you out through its endless tortuosities to the open air. All that is but a faint and feeble description of the always spiritually intricate book that Fraser of Brea has bequeathed to his fellow-countrymen and his fellow-churchmen. To as many of them, that is, as have an intricate life of their own, and a labyrinthine heart of their own. And among the thousands of his Christian fellow-

countrymen in our day, there must surely be some men still left with something of the intellectual strength, and the spiritual inwardness, and the experimental concentration, and the holy fear and the close walk with God, of the Laird of Brea. Some men who will feel that they are not such absolute monsters among men, and so much alone in Scotland, as they always thought they were till they were told about James Fraser the Laird of Brea. Well may Dr. Elder Cumming say that Brea's is a book to be read by all men with wonder and with awe; and, I will add, to be read by some men with an ever-increasing thankfulness and an ever-increasing hopefulness. Yes, well might his old publisher in first venturing Brea's autobiography out on the market go on to say, 'There is perhaps no other Performance giving a more distinct Account of a supernatural Work of Grace. And it is thought not to be unseasonable at this juncture for reviving Piety and the Exercise of Grace, and convicting those who make a jest of these serious Matters.'

Now in summing up all I have already said about Fraser and his autobiography, and in introducing what more I shall have to say about him and his book in some future discourses, I will say a single word here about the immense importance of intellect in our evangelical preachers and experimental writers. And instead of any weak words of my own on that matter, take these so fresh and so pointed words of Santa Teresa: 'I always had a great respect and affection for intellectual and

learned men,' she says. 'It is my experience that all who intend to be true Christians will do well to treat with men of mind when they are being deeply exercised about their souls. The more intellect and the more learning our preachers and pastors have, the better. The devil is exceedingly afraid of learning, especially when it is accompanied with great humility and great virtue. Let no one be taken into this religious house of ours unless she is a woman of a sound understanding. For if she is without mind, she will neither know herself nor will she understand her best teachers. And ignorance and self-conceit is a disease that is simply incurable. And, besides, it usually carries great malice and great malignity along with it. Commend me to people with good heads. From all silly devotees may God deliver me!' Had Santa Teresa lived in Scotland in the seventeenth century she would to a certainty have taken a house at Culross in order to sit under Fraser's ministry. Nay, she would to a certainty have taken service as a scullery-maid on the Bass Rock just to be under the same roof with a man of such learning and such intellect in his religion; and a man, at the same time, of such a broken heart in his daily devotions.

And, then, one of the best of intellects of that intellectual day is here to be seen employed, exclusively and unceasingly, upon what its owner conceived to be the best, the noblest, and the most commanding of all occupations—the salvation of his own soul; and in and after that the same salva-

tion of other men's souls. Let a man constantly examine himself on that supreme matter, says the Apostle. Well, James Fraser has only one fault in that respect: he takes the Apostle much too seriously and much too literally, for he is always and in everything examining himself. Whether Paul would have praised Fraser or blamed him for that incessant introspection of his, you have your opinion, and I have mine. Watch and pray, says our Lord also. Well, did any of the twelve do that like the Laird of Brea? No, I am quite sure that none of them did—not, at any rate, to begin with. 'My people do not consider,' complained the God of covenanted Israel. Our complaint here again with Fraser is this, that he considered too much, and that he would do nothing else all his days but consider inwardly and then act outwardly. Fraser believed with all his deep mind and with all his renewed heart that there was but one thing absolutely and supremely necessary as between him and his God; and he wrote his book and lived his life accordingly. In season and out of season Fraser of Brea pursued that one thing with an intricacy, and with a tenacity, and with a perspicuity unparalleled in all my reading or hearing of such men and such matters.

And then I have this also for my defence and apology in taking up such an out-of-date man—Fraser of Brea is one of ourselves. He is one of our own covenanted household of faith. He is one of our own cloud of witnesses. 'People are variously constituted,' says Dr. Newman in an

exquisite essay. 'What influences one man does not in the same way or to the same extent influence another man. What I delight to trace,' he says, 'and to study, is the interior life of God's great saints. And when a great saint himself speaks to me about himself, that is what I like best, and that is what is done by those early luminaries of the Christian Church, Athanasius, and Hilary, and Ambrose, and Theodoret. This is why I exult in the folios of the Fathers. I am not obliged to read the whole of them. I read what I can, and am content.' And if I may be bold enough to borrow that from Newman, I shall be loyal enough to apply that to myself and to say that that is the very same reason why I so exult in Bunyan, and in Baxter, and in Goodwin, and in Brea, and in Halyburton, and in Boston, and in Chalmers: a body of men who, as Coleridge has it, are, for the matter in hand, worth a whole brigade of the Fathers. At the same time, I do not forget that people are very variously constituted. What influences one does not in the same way influence another. Nor am I obliged to read the whole of our evangelical and experimental and Puritan Fathers. I read what I can, and am content; or rather, I for one exult—and then, as a wise old writer has it, 'the judicious are fond of originals.' And then, as to the reward that we may confidently look for from our study of Fraser's autobiography. In his dedication to Thomas Ross of Tain, our author says: 'I have in nothing been more refreshed, quickened, and edified than by hearing and reading of the experiences of others of God's people, and in nothing more

comforted and sanctified than by a serious recalling to mind of the Lord's intricate dealings with myself.' And far on in the body of the book he returns to that subject, and says: 'The calling to mind and seriously meditating on the Lord's secret dealings with myself as to soul and body; my recalling of His manifold and intimate mercies to me has done me very much good; has cleared my case; has confirmed my soul concerning God's love to me, and of my interest in Him; and has made me love Him more and more. O what good hath the writing of this book of my Memoirs done me! What wells of water have mine eyes been opened to see that before were hid from me! Scarce anything hath done me more good than the writing of this book!'

II

'MY DISPOSITION WAS SULLEN AND MY TEMPER PEEVISH'

ST. AUGUSTINE says that he sometimes saw children still in their mothers' arms showing selfishness, and fretfulness, and sullenness, and peevishness, and envy, and jealousy. And all that to a degree that made him tremble for their own future as well as for the future of all those who should have to do with them. In a very powerful passage in his *Confessions* the greatest of the Church fathers tells us that he saw all that all around him to his utter disillusionment and dismay, and to his inconsolable distress. And our Scottish Augustine tells us that he very early discovered all that same original sin in himself, and that to a dismay and to a distress that only grew the more upon him the more he attained to a spiritually-minded old age.

Now the Holy Scriptures, in their own heart-searching way, all take us down to the secret root of all that. And the Holy Scriptures, and with them

all our deepest theology and anthropology, fully and frankly face all that, and prescribe and provide a cure for all that in their own divine way. For one, hear David on all that in himself. 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, Thou desirest the truth about myself in my inward parts; and in my hidden part Thou shalt make me to know true wisdom about myself.' And, for another great authority on these great matters, hear the apostle Paul. 'Among whom we all had our conversation in times past, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' And there is no getting past this of our Lord: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. Marvel not, therefore, that I said unto thee that thou must be born again.' And James Fraser, looking back on his childhood, and indeed, on his whole life, sees all that indwelling sin in himself, and he is still struggling with the bitter dregs of all that indwelling sin in himself, when he is composing his so truthful and so wise and so powerful book about the spiritual intricacies of his still unsanctified heart. 'I was born in the North of Scotland in 1639, July the 22nd, and was not like to live. But the Lord healed me, and I lived. My disposition was by nature sullen. I loved not to be dawted nor to wear gaudy clothes. Nor had my parents any pleasant tales to tell about me; such tales as fond parents are wont to tell about their children. For, though my parents were fond of me, yet my temper was so peevish that I was no

dawtie. Even at this early time I showed plainly that I had a heart to do evil. Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.'

'My disposition was sullen.' That is to say, he was naturally what we call a sulky child. And even after he became a man he was still what we call sullen and churlish, and not very easy to live with. Like Nabal in the Bible, Fraser was sour-hearted, bad-tempered, and obstinate; he was a mule rather than a man. By this time Fraser had become what our Lord demanded that Nicodemus must become, and what He still demands that we must all become, that is to say he had become born again. But new birth and all, Fraser all the more felt within himself as if he was to be doomed to carry to his grave the inborn mule that was in him; that inborn mule which even the new birth itself had not as yet been able to cast out. You have all seen children like little Fraser. You have all known grown-up men like the Laird of Brea. Nay, you may quite possibly be one of those sad men yourself. Yes; in the name of God see and make sure how you stand yourself in this respect of churlishness and sullenness of heart. Look well into James Fraser's glass and see. Look well into your wife's eyes, a still better glass, on occasion, and see. But for fear that you may not have honesty enough nor clear-headedness enough to look into that glass and to read home to your own conscience and your own heart what is to be seen in that glass, I will take the privilege and the opportunity of the pulpit, and I will tell you what

is seen of God in her eyes many a secret day and many a secret night because of your sullenness, and churlishness, and mulishness toward her and hers. I find this written about you and the like of you in an honest old book that you are not likely to have bought, and therefore I will borrow your portrait from it so that your salvation from your sullenness may cost you nothing. Here, then, is your portrait taken from life; if so be: 'When old Sullenheart was a young man, and when he fell in love, he was as soft as butter and as sweet as honey. His old school and college friends that he was wont so to trample upon scarcely recognised him now. They had sometimes seen very bad men converted, but they had never seen such a sudden and such a complete conversion as this. For their proverb of sourness and sullenness and mulishness was now a new creature. All old things had suddenly passed away, and all things had suddenly become new. For a time. But time passes. And time passed with our mule also. Till there gradually but surely came back to him all his old bad heart and all his old bad life, and more. And till, when long enough time had elapsed, he was found to be more mulish and more sour and more sullen than ever before. He would still be affable, and accessible, and entertaining, the best of company and the soul of it, abroad. But instantly on his return to his own house he would relapse into his mulishness, and would sink back into more than his native sullenness. He would swallow his meals in silence, and then would sit all night with a cloud out of·

nothing on his brow. Nothing would please him. He found nothing at home to his mind. The furniture, the hours of the house, the habits of the house, were all disposed in order to please him. But he was never heard to say to his wife or to his child or to his servant that he was ever pleased. He never admitted that a meal was cooked and served to his taste, or a seat set to shelter and repose him. And all the time it was not that he did not honour and even love his household, in a way. It was all owing to his ineradicable sullenness. It was all owing to the unconquerable and inexpugnable mule that was dwelling in him.' Now, honestly, do any of you long-married men recognise yourselves in that, or in any part of that? I am quite sure that some of you do.

But to go on with Fraser of Brea. It is written in the Book of the Intricacies of his heart and his life that he was out in his parish visiting his people one day. And toward the end of the day he rode his pony up to the door of one of his elders to have a conference with him about some of the people in his district. All the time of the conversation the elder sat fondling a pet dog, to which he paid far more attention than to his minister. And when toward the end of the interview his wife came into the room to give them tea, and when she ventured a word or two into the conversation, he turned a look on her, with a snarl, such that some of you wives have sometimes heard at home. Fraser rode back to his manse that night with some long halts by the way. 'After all my evangelical preaching,' he said to

himself, 'and after all our communion seasons together, to see an elder of mine such a brute at home as that!' Till, as his pony sometimes stood still, and sometimes walked slowly, not understanding exactly what her muttering master wanted her to do, Fraser began to see that it was a case of like minister like elder; at any rate, in the matter of mulishness and sullen-heartedness at home. The minister was much later than was his wont in arriving at the manse door that night. But his whole household ever after connected with that late night a great change in the head of the house. And a sermon he preached next Sabbath, and—if I am not mistaken—on the very text of this evening, was so conspicuously blessed to that mulish elder that his household also took immediate remark of this absolute miracle. Never despair of yourself, O son of Nabal in Maon! O son of James Fraser of Brea and of his elder! And you wives like Abigail, and you children and servants of hers, never wholly despair of a husband, or of a father, or of a master, as long as you have their conscience, and their Saviour, and their Sanctifier on your side. And when you are tempted to go apart to weep over your evil lot, weep as much as you like in secret, but always call James Fraser and his Nabal-like elder to mind, and never allow yourselves wholly to despair.

But the total ruin of the happiness of a household does not always come from the husband's side of the house. 'Curse God, and die!' were the peevish words of a peevish wife on one occasion to

a much-suffering husband. Now, peevishness is just a man's sullenness in a woman. Peevishness is just sullenness somewhat watered and weakened down. But a weak passion as it is, peevishness is not any the less ruinous to multitudes of miserable homes among us. I do not find Fraser saying much about peevishness among the wives and mothers and mistresses of his parish. The strength and the depth and the devoutness of the Highland character may perhaps account for that. But Bishop Butler spent his pastorate among the more effeminate English of the south, and this is how he describes some women and some households in his diocese. 'I mention peevishness with pity,' he says. 'With real pity for the unhappy people, who from their inferior station or other circumstances and relationships are obliged to be in the way of peevishness, and thus to serve for a supply and an occasion to it. Peevishness languidly discharges itself upon everybody that comes in its way. Real peevishness is continually discharging itself upon something or some one.' And the great moralist greatly pities the husbands and the children and the servants of the peevish women whom he knew so well, and had watched so closely, till he made them so much material for one of his most powerful [illegible].

But, now, the true point of all that is this: How are you and I ever to be completely cured of our sullen disposition and our peevish temper? For all that about Nabal, and about Brea and his elder, and about Butler and his diocese, it is all written for

our learning. Well, my brethren, our cure, yours and mine, will begin when we begin to be truly troubled about ourselves in all these matters. And the cure will be more than half accomplished when we begin to be evangelically troubled about our selves like James Fraser of Brea. That is to say, when we watch ourselves in everything of that kind, and then go immediately and directly to Jesus Christ about ourselves. Claim, then, Christ's help on the spot, in all these matters, my brethren. Claim your right to be made like Him, and especially like Him in His disposition and His temper and His behaviour at home. And He will hear you and will help you in that. He is bound to help you. Till you will live to take rank with Fraser and with his elder as a mule that has been changed into a lamb, and as a perfect Nabal who has been changed into a Christian gentleman.

And then every day, and all the day, live and act and speak and look everywhere, and to every one, as you prayed to do in the morning. For one thing —practise appreciation and praise in your thoughts and in your words and in your looks, and especially at home. Nabal never said a single word of praise to Abigail after they were married. He never said to her what the Bible says about her, that she was a woman of a sound understanding, or that she was of a beautiful countenance, or that she was always well dressed when he came home from the field, or that she managed his house well, or that she brought up his children well, or had been God's best blessing to him ever since he first saw her

sweet face. Never once nowadays did Nabal smile upon Abigail, or take her by the hand, or speak a word of true love to her heart. Nabal was his name and Nabal was his nature. And both his name and his nature are written for our learning.

And now I will sum up all this to you and to myself in this one word. Be no more, after to-night, a mule at home. But be frank and hearty and generous in your appreciations and in your praises, and especially at home. If your wife is dressed to your taste, say so. If your dinner is cooked and served up to your taste, say so. If your sour and sullen soul ever gets doctrine, and reproof, and correction, and instruction in righteousness from a sermon, say so. If a good book has ever been an epoch in your selfish and sullen life, write to its author and say so. The size and the substance and the spirit of a man's soul is at once seen by the spontaneity and the generosity and the exuberance and the warmth of his praises. Just as the smallness and the stinginess and the sullenness and the mulishness of another man's soul is all disclosed to us by his despicable ingratitude to all his benefactors. Almighty God Himself inhabits the praises of Israel. And to praise, and with your whole heart, all those men and women and children who deserve praise at your hands; that, already, is a certain contribution toward your praise of God. Nabal, the mule of Maon, praised neither God nor man nor wife nor child nor servant nor prophet nor psalmist. Whereas, David did nothing else. Be

you all so many Davids in this matter of praise, my brethren. And practise every day upon your fellow men so that you may attain at last to praise God aright, and with acceptance: God who is supremely worthy to be praised.

III

'FOUR FALSE STEPS THAT I TOOK TOWARD MY CONVERSION'

ETYMOLOGICALLY, as the scholars say: both etymologically and morally taken, conversion is just conversion. It is just to turn round. It is just having hitherto gone on the wrong road to turn round and henceforth to go on the right road. It is just to stop going away any further from God, and from Jesus Christ, and from eternal life, and to say, 'I will arise and go to my Father.' It is, as Paul has it, from being an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; it is to return from a life like that, and it is to dwell ever after in that city which shall be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness. All that is conversion in its Latin root, and in its moral significance, and in its religious experience. Thomas Goodwin, who writes to such purpose on this as on every other spiritual subject, says in one place, that this is the best definition of conversion that

he had ever met with; this: 'Conversion is the total change of a man's chief end.' Before his conversion every man's chief end is himself: always and in everything his chief end is himself. But after every true conversion God, sooner or later, comes to His own. God, sooner or later, comes back to His throne and His sceptre in that man's heart. And the truly converted man—the ideally converted man, shall I say?—lives no longer to himself but to his God and Saviour. He has been redeemed with a price, and he knows it and acknowledges it. 'There is a new loadstone,' says that great preacher, 'let into every renewed heart, till every renewed man sails henceforth according to another compass.'

Now, while all that is true, at the same time there is nothing in which renewed men differ more than just in the manner and the scope of their conversion. To give some freshness and some variety to the subject in hand, I shall at this stage tell you what some great authorities have said about this matter. For one, the great preacher already named has this: 'You all know,' he says to his specially-experienced and specially-understanding people, 'you all know that there are two great types of conversion common in the Church of Christ. The conversion of some men is so sudden and so violent as to be seen and acknowledged of all men. It is accompanied with such an inundation and landflood of humiliation for sin. Others, again, are carried on as upon a quiet and sunny stream. Their conversion has been like the silent

and slow breaking of the morning: it has not been discernible neither to themselves nor to others the exact time when their day began to dawn. In their case the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day.' And a contemporary of his has this on this same subject: 'There are some persons of whom the grace of God takes an early hold. And the good spirit inhabiting them carries them on in an even constancy, through innocence into virtue. Their religion bears equal date with their manhood. And reason and religion, like warp and woof, make up one web of a wise, an exemplary, and a happy life.' And a great divine of a very different school has this: 'It may freely be granted that conversion to God is often instantaneous: unexpectedly raised from variety of occasions. Thus, one by seeing only a withered tree [he refers to Brother Lawrence who wrote *The Presence of God*]: another by reading the lives and deaths of the antediluvian Fathers: one by hearing of heaven, another of hell: one by reading of the love or the wrath of God: another of the sufferings of Christ: may find himself melted of a sudden into penitence.' And Coleridge, one of the truest Catholics of all our religious literature, has this in his *Aids to Reflection*: 'Awakened by a sermon, by a calamity, by a sickbed, or by a providential escape: awakened by the cockcrow, as it were, the Christian pilgrim sets out in the morning twilight, while as yet much of the full daylight of God is still far below the horizon.'

Goodwin, our greatest pulpit exegete of Paul, has this also: 'Set narrations of solemn conversions,' he says, 'are rarely, if ever, to be found in the Old Testament.' And that is true. But the New Testament, true to its own special genius, enters far more particularly, and far more experimentally, into its classical cases of conversion. The outstanding cases of New Testament conversion will at once occur to every memory. But with all that it is in evangelical Church history, and in evangelical biography and autobiography, written since the New Testament canon was closed, that the most circumstantial and detailed accounts of conversion are to be read. The subcanonical conversions of a high distinction and of great detail are such conversions as those of Augustine, and Luther, and Knox, and Bruce, and Halyburton, and Bunyan, and Cromwell, and Newton, and Cowper, and Wesley, and Chalmers. But the conversion of James Fraser, Laird of Brea and minister of Culross, has so many 'intricacies' connected with it that it ranks in that respect above them all, though his name is not known at all, nor his book read at all.

From the time he was nine years of age till he was seventeen, the young Laird of Brea took four steps, so he tells us, in the direction of his conversion. And the first of those four steps was this. He early learned some children's prayers by heart, and he repeated those prayers at his bedside morning and night. And this practice of his gave him a certain peace of conscience from his early

childhood up. And when he fell at any time into any sin that deeply wounded and greatly defiled his conscience, he returned the more punctually to his prayers, till he found again a certain healing and a certain cleansing. But as time went on, what with bad company and what with both open and secret sin, he gradually gave up all pretence of prayer. And thus his first step toward conversion came to a dead stop and ended in nothing. Now what about yourselves, you who are still between nine and seventeen? Have you taken as much as James Fraser's first step? Do you pray even a formal prayer before you lie down at night, and again when you rise up in the morning? Or, having at one time taken that first step toward your conversion, have you fallen away even from that step, till you now lie down and rise up without God and without hope in the world? Well, that was James Fraser's first futile step toward his so intricate conversion.

Some time after that Fraser took his second step: when, in his own words, 'he began to bake his own bread.' By this time he had a ministerial tutor, whom he describes as 'a godly and a tender-hearted man, but none of the deepest reach.' His new tutor made young Fraser give over his 'conned and committed prayers,' as he calls them; and rather to utter five sentences straight out of his own heart than a whole prayer-book composed for him by other men. But very much for the former reasons, young Fraser's second step ended very much as his first step had ended. His free prayers, like his

committed prayers, came to nothing. And for this sufficient reason: Jesus Christ was not in his second step any more than in his first step—only James Fraser and his self-conceived prayers. All the time it was what was done by James Fraser for himself at Brea, and not what was done for James Fraser on Calvary. All the time it was the foundation that he was laying for himself, and not the One Foundation that God had laid for him in Zion. And, as a sure consequence, his house that he had built for himself with such labour on the sand soon fell about his ears. And Fraser was still in this utterly Christless condition when he came south to Edinburgh to enter the college.

Fraser's third step toward his conversion must be told in his own warning and memorable words: 'Before, I was taken up with prayer alone; but now I made the same conscience of all my duties. I thereupon read the Scriptures and meditated on what I read. I sanctified the Sabbath and read only spiritual books on that sacred day. I left off all my sinful and doubtful ways, and I made conscience of all my moral duties. And yet, all the time, I was a total stranger to Christ. In Christ's own words, I was a complete pharisee. And, for the salvation of my readers, I will describe myself all through my third step. I looked only at the outward letter of the law, and if only I went about the outward form of my duties, I sought no more. I rested in my duties as my end, I did not employ them as so many means to bring me to

Christ, my true End. I looked on my duties as *opus operatum*. I did not run my pipe up to the Fountain. And whensoever I fell into any fresh sin I sought to satisfy God and my own conscience by doubling my duties. I gave my doubled duties to God as so much atonement and propitiation for my sin. All this time I was in the most utter ignorance of the mystery of the Gospel. I knew not faith, nor the promises, nor justification, nor imputed righteousness. Paul describes me exactly when he says that, being absolutely ignorant of God's righteousness, I was going about to establish my own righteousness, not having submitted myself to the righteousness of God: that is, to Jesus Christ. By all of which I now see clearly that I was wholly away from the life of conversion.'

Fraser's fourth step, if a step it could be called, was his three college years of absolute misery: now sinning, and now repenting; now falling, and now attempting to rise again in his own strength; now getting a little light from the sermons he heard and from the books he read; and then sinking down into a deeper darkness. Many of you know that dismal condition. And those who do not know it in their own experience will not understand it even by Fraser's striking description of it. Fraser might have had his conversion before he took any of those futile steps. Only, no one, neither his father, nor his mother, nor his tutor, nor his minister, had ever taken Fraser and had made unmistakably plain to him what is the one and the ever-open way of a sinner's salvation.

Now, out of all that, let these three lessons be learned and laid to heart and remembered by us all. And, first, there have been many most genuine conversions attained without any previous steps taken at all. And, indeed, the normal conversion, the ideal conversion, is that conversion which is entered on without so much as a single preparatory step. When you are travelling on a wholly wrong road, and when that is suddenly and authoritatively pointed out to you, what do you do? You do not take four steps more on the wrong road before you turn round, nor three, nor two, nor even one. No! that very moment you turn round, and your very first step is taken on the right road. And so should it be in every moral and spiritual and evangelical conversion. Turn you then where you now sit. Yes, just where you now sit. Turn this very moment. Be turned before you stand up to sing your closing praise. And then open your heart to receive the apostolic benediction with your face already turned Zionward, and with your back turned for ever on all your former evil ways. And then for the first time go down from the house of God to your own house a truly and a resolutely converted man. And all your days, be they few or many, push on with all your might and main. For you have a long road to overtake before the sun sets upon your upward path.

Then again, just as there are fierce and fiery and thunderbolt conversions that burn a hole in the very earth at the spot where they took place,

so, on the other hand, there are easy and sweet and quite unconscious conversions that leave no mark of time or of place upon the converted man. No mark but only upon his after walk and conversation. You will remember what the man who had been born blind said to the cavilling and sneering Pharisees. 'One thing I know,' he said, 'that whereas I was blind, now I see.' And that is all the evidence that many saintly-minded men have of their sure conversion. They can remember a time when they were wholly blind; wholly blind to themselves, wholly blind to God, wholly blind to Jesus Christ, wholly blind to His sin-cleansing blood, and to His justifying righteousness, and to His sanctifying Spirit, and to evangelical holiness, and to eternal life. But now they see all these things. And they see nothing else so clearly and so continually. Well, if that is so, what better evidence and full assurance could any man have of the reality and the validity of his conversion than more and more to see, and to love, and to follow after all these things?

And, most momentous and most immediate of all: to every hitherto unconverted man and woman in this house: and more especially to all those persons present who are still between nine and seventeen, James Fraser's Saviour speaks personally and directly to-night to all such, and says: 'Turn ye, turn ye! For, why will you die? I have no pleasure in your death: but, rather, that you turn and live.' Now, the moment He says that to you, say you to Him: 'Turn me! O my Lord and

Saviour, turn Thou me! And always cause Thy face to shine upon me, and I shall be converted now, and shall in the end be saved!' Only you keep turning, and keep praying; keep praying, and keep turning; and so you shall be both converted now and for ever saved. And then when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

How James Fraser was converted on a Communion week when a student of seventeen in Edinburgh, we shall see in our next discourse.

IV

'MY CONVERSION ON A COMMUNION WEEK WHEN A STUDENT OF SEVENTEEN IN EDINBURGH'

GEORGE GILLESPIE, following John Calvin and other great evangelical reformers, argues with great convincingness that the Lord's Supper was not originally intended to be a converting ordinance. The Lord's Supper, Gillespie conclusively proves, was instituted by our Lord in order to nourish and to strengthen the life of grace where it has been already begun. But neither John Calvin nor George Gillespie ever said that the Lord's Supper is not often overruled to be a converting occasion. As a matter of fact it has been made a converting occasion to many men in all ages of the Church. And it is James Fraser's thankful testimony that the celebration of the Lord's Supper, when he was a student in Edinburgh, was the gracious occasion of his own so intricate conversion.

'I being at the University, and being about seventeen years of age, our minister one Sabbath

morning intimated that the Lord's Supper would be dispensed by him next Sabbath. I had always been brought up to have a holy fear concerning that great ordinance, lest I should ever eat and drink to my own condemnation. I knew quite well that I was still in an unconverted condition, and the Lord did consequently put it into my mind to do my very utmost that week, both by ordinary and by extraordinary means, to win to a converted condition before next Lord's Day. Nor did I think that my conversion was within the compass of my own power; but I hoped that I doing my diligence the Lord might come to my help. And for that reason I set to work immediately. On the preparation Sabbath I went back to public worship in the evening, and that evening I felt a relish for the whole service that I had never felt before. And on returning to my lodgings I spent the night in the same relish for what I was doing.' That communion week in Edinburgh saw the commencement of James Fraser's spiritual life. And now if you will go with me I will do my best to take you through some of the days and nights of that eventful week, so that you may see with some clearness in what way that Lord's Supper in this city was made the occasion of that so fruitful and so far-reaching conversion. And to begin with, the very intimation of the approaching communion day was made an eminent means of grace to young Fraser. For he was led of God to take his first step toward his coming conversion when his minister made the intimation from the pulpit that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

was to be dispensed in that church next Lord's Day. Now there is surely a great lesson to us all in that fact: a great lesson both to our ministers and to our people. For there is nothing that is more of a mere formality, and, so to say, more monotonous, to the most of us, than just the returning intimation of the session clerk that 'If the Lord will, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be dispensed here next Lord's Day.' But after reading the third chapter of James Fraser's Autobiography I can never make that quarterly intimation again without adding to it both the prayer and the hope that the mere intimation itself may be made the first step to the speedy conversion of some young persons present.

And not our communion intimation only. But let all our pulpit intimations be so many means of grace to the congregation, and in this way: Let every returning intimation of our women's Sabbath morning prayer-meeting lead some one to ask herself what reason she can give why she is not present at that meeting, and there saying with her sisters: 'O God, Thou art my God: early will I seek Thee!' And let every returning intimation of our Tuesday evening prayer-meeting lead some one to say for the first time:

> 'Jesus! where'er Thy people meet,
> There they behold Thy mercy-seat;
> Where'er they seek Thee Thou art found,
> And every place is hallowed ground.'

And let every returning intimation of the monthly meeting of the Deacons' Court lead some one to

recollect himself and say with the thankful Psalmist: 'I will go into Thy House with burnt-offerings: I will pay Thee my vows, which my lips uttered, and my mouth spoke, when I was in my trouble.' And let every weekly intimation of our choir practice lead all the choir itself, and many more who have the talent, to say:

> 'Take my voice and let me sing
> Always, only, for my King:
> Take my lips and let them be
> Filled with messages from Thee.'

And also let every returning intimation of the Children's Friday Hour lead every father and mother to say to themselves:

> 'Those that within the house of God
> Are planted by His grace:
> They shall grow up and flourish all
> In our God's holy place.'

After having seen James Fraser's conversion beginning to spring up out of a mere pulpit intimation, I can never again grudge the handfuls of intimation papers on a Sabbath morning. Nor will you let drop out of your mind the divine opportunities and occasions that are intimated from God every new week to you and to your children.

'I knew that I was in an unconverted condition, and that knowledge set me to work immediately.' For one thing, Fraser got his college studies up early every day so as to set himself free to attend all the pre-communion services advertised for the evenings of that sacred week. And he testifies to

us that he did not attend any one of those services in vain. 'Relish' is his continually recurring word all that week. The Thursday services especially spoke home to his conscience and then to his heart. And so drawn on, he spent the Thursday night as he had never spent that night before. For he spent it on those spiritual books, Thomas Shepard's and Thomas Goodwin's especially, to which his home tutor had introduced him. The readers of Marcus Aurelius will remember how he thanks the gods for the fine books to which his tutor had introduced him to be his lifelong companions. But neither the stoic Emperor nor his devout tutor had any such books to read in their day as young Fraser had in his lodgings in the Sciennes of Edinburgh that preparation week. 'I saw a beauty in my books, and I felt a relish for them, such as I had never tasted before.' Nor will that be wondered at by any one who has read Goodwin especially. I could tell you of another Edinburgh student who found a relish in that greatest of Pauline exegetes, such as he has scarce ever found in any other author, sacred or profane. And that on scores of communion weeks: Thursdays, Saturdays, Sabbaths, and Mondays. I shall not live to see the happy day for Scotland, but you young communicants will, when a free and a re-united and a revived Church will recover to her people the old fast-days, and the old preparation Saturdays, and the old thanksgiving Mondays, and they will be such as shall make the Kirk o' Shotts itself to be forgotten. 'Books and discourses of spiritual divinity were alone sweet

to me in those memorable days,' says Fraser. Paul himself did not surpass the young laird of Brea that never-to-be-forgotten fast-day. Just think of all this taking place in the lodgings of a Highland student down in our own old town. 'Hanging by this small thread I went to prayer with many sad complaints. But when I was yet a great way off the Lord Himself came running to meet me. For a Gospel view of Jesus Christ was miraculously and immediately given me. Such spiritual representations of Jesus Christ as these were then made to me. I saw that He is made of God to be the Mediator for poor sinners, their one Friend and their all-sufficient Saviour: the Way, the Truth, the Life. While I was thus exercised a most marvellous light did shine into my mind, till I did see, with the eyes of my mind, not of my body, that Just One in all His Gospel glory. It was such a sight that mortal eye never saw anything at all like it. And it swallowed me up till I turned speechless and could only say: What is this? And where am I now? The love and the loveliness of the Son of God did so far excel all I can ever tell to any. And then, after I had recovered a little, I remember I said: O Lord, Thou hast fairly overcome me! My heart and my hand are henceforth Thine alone. I shall live and die with Thee. What am I and what is my father's house, that all this should come to me! After a time I rose from off my knees and went out into the fields and spent how long I do not know in singing songs of salvation. And thus was I made ready for the Lord's Supper on the next Sabbath.'

'Let a man examine himself well in this great matter,' says the Apostle. Now when young Fraser examined himself in his own so intricate way, this was the clear result. 'I look upon that as the time of my conversion, because of these considerations: First, because then and thereafter I found my heart wholly changed as to my friends and my favourites. I now felt a new delight in thinking of those men whom I believed to be true men of God. And men whom I simply hated before because of some real or supposed disobligement I had suffered at their hands, I now forgave and forgot all that, and took them to my heart. I now found myself putting them in the right, and myself in the wrong. I now wished them and theirs all the good that was good for them. I remembered what John said about himself and the other apostles: 'We know,' he said, 'that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' And as I read that I reasoned that the test which satisfied and assured the disciple whom Jesus loved might surely satisfy and assure me.' Now, my friends, how does your supposed conversion stand that same test? Do you now love those men who at one time had disobliged you? Those men who have injured you and yours? Is it now the case that in spite of all revenge and hatred and envy and ill-will you now, for Christ's sake, sometimes actually pray for those men by name? 'When at any time I read or hear of a godly man, and a godly action, my heart instantly warms up to that man, as if the action had been done directly to myself.' Now can you

say that? Yes, I am quite sure some of you can.

And then there was this also. 'I found my heart consenting to this also. When I read in Peter that I was to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and all evil-speaking, and was to desire the sincere milk of the Word, so that, like a new-born babe, I might live thereby, I found myself in a quite wonderful way doing that. I had now a great desire every day for some of the sincere milk of God's Word in sermons and in books, till all that was a new world to me. I felt a new and a supernatural relish for spiritual books and for spiritual sermons, a relish that made me often stop and say, Surely this must come of my new birth!' Now, again, what do you say to that sign of conversion? Do you discover in yourselves a new spiritual relish? There is nothing you should know better than the sort of sermons and the sort of books you like best and relish most. Well, then, what are they? And then, for one thing more, and surely best of all, there was this. As the old evangelical schoolmen had it: 'Est aliquid in Christo formosius Salvatore.' That is to say, the personal excellences of Jesus Christ Himself all make Him far more to be delighted in and adored than all His soul-saving offices. Now, is it not very remarkable to see an Edinburgh student of seventeen making that penetrating discovery concerning Christ, and then taking such true comfort out of that discovery? Just listen to our young schoolman: 'I reasoned with myself that there must surely be some true reality

and some true validity in my supposed conversion, because my whole soul did now see and esteem and love the Lord Jesus Christ Himself above all else. Above all duties, and above all ordinances, and even above all His benefits. And till I made a cordial covenant to be His and to serve Him and His for ever. And till I subscribed to all that which Asaph so well says: Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is no one on earth to be put in comparison with Thee.' Now what do you think? Can there be any doubt of the reality and the validity and the security of young Fraser's conversion after all that? I think not. I only wish I had as well grounded an assurance of mine!

And then he sums up in this way: 'Although there have been many temptations and many shakings and many interruptions, yet hath that spunk which was kindled that communion week never wholly died out. Some good has always remained with me ever since that far-off week. Till, all things considered, I shall think that I was then savingly converted from my sinful life to my Saviour and to the life everlasting.'

May we all have as sound and saving a conversion!

V

'MY WHOLE LIFE IS A CONTINUAL CONVERSION'

MY old and honoured friend Dr. Elder Cumming of Glasgow, in his admirable appreciation of Fraser expresses his regret that Fraser so often uses the word 'conversion' concerning his whole Christian life. But after giving the fullest consideration to what that deeply experienced and deservedly eminent evangelical preacher says concerning Fraser's frequent use of the word 'conversion,' I cannot share with him in that criticism and complaint of his. For so far as I understand Fraser he employs that experimental and autobiographical word in much the same sense in which our Lord employs it when he is instructing His disciples concerning the inwardness and the depth and the intricacy and the unceasing progress of the spiritual life in their souls. Our Lord must have startled His already converted disciples, and He must have made the dullest-minded of them to ponder and to think, when, seeing their pride and their ambition and their jealousy and their envy of one another,

He called a little child unto Him, and said to them, 'Except ye be converted, and become as this little child, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' And after Peter had been three years called and converted and had been all that time under the continual tuition of his Master, warning that proud disciple of his coming fall, his Master said to him, 'When thou art converted from Thy coming fall and art truly penitent for it and art forgiven it, then strengthen thy brethren in all their similar trials and temptations and falls.' Now it is in that experimental and autobiographical and vivid sense that James Fraser employs this word 'conversion' so often concerning himself. And it is in that same experimental sense that I shall now employ it when I proceed to speak to you for a little concerning Fraser and concerning yourselves.

'A Christian man's whole life,' says our author in his fifth chapter, 'is but a continual conversion. And the Lord after every time of backsliding draws our souls back again to Himself very much in the same way as at our first conversion. Yea, He deals with us sometimes as if we had never been converted before. For myself,' he says, 'I have found a far deeper and a far more distinct law-work in my after convictions of sin than ever I felt at my first conviction. I was converted that communion week in Edinburgh as with a clap. But now the Lord draws me back and back to Himself step by step, so that I am better and better prepared for Christ before every time of my renewed returns to Him.' Do you follow that, my friends? Do you take

Fraser up? You have had that same experience yourselves, have you not? Your law-work, as Paul experienced it and then wrote to the Romans about it, and as Fraser experienced it and now writes to you about it, your own law-work is a thousand times more deep and deadly in your after life than ever it was or could be at your first conviction and conversion. With most converts in their first experiences their law-work is but skin deep, so to speak. But the awful inwardness and the awful purity and the awful spirituality of God's holy law is all experienced more and more as the soul attains to a true spirituality itself. As Fraser says, 'It is only after we have come to know Christ better, and better, and ever better; it is only then that we come back to Him with more and more conviction of our utter and everlasting hopelessness but for Him, and but for His all-sufficient salvation.' Just so. No young convert, the very best, as yet knows much of himself. Paul did not. Luther, our second Paul, did not. Fraser, our second Luther, did not. No man ever did at first. The unsounded depth of our own depravity, the bottomless pit of sin and misery that is in us all—that takes a long lifetime for its full discovery. Indeed it is never fully discovered to us in this life —else we would go mad at the sight of it. The Holy Spirit has many awful things to show His subjects about themselves, but they are not able to bear all those awful things as yet; no more than a little child is able to bear all that lies wrapped up in its own soul against its threescore and ten years to come. 'But now,' says the minister of Culross

as he began to grow toward his threescore and ten years in the spiritual life, 'but now the Lord insists on my seeing every step of my returns to Him. So that all the early knowledge I had of myself and of Him now seems to me to be as no knowledge at all compared with what I have now.'

Again, and further on in my pursuit of this intricate man, I find this: 'The whole subsequent life of a truly Christian man is one continual conversion, in which he is perpetually humbled under an awful and an unbearable sense of his own incurable sinfulness.' That is to say, he is perpetually cast down in his own soul; he is perpetually degraded in his own eyes; he is perpetually disgusted at himself; he is perpetually horrified at himself. In reading Sir John Coleridge's beautiful biography of John Keble the other day I came on an exact case of this same experience. John Keble was perpetually humbled under his own inward and unconquerable sinfulness, till he could not keep his humiliation out of his *Christian Year*, nor out of his private letters to such intimate friends as his future biographer. But Sir John cannot comprehend Keble. He had never had that perpetual humiliation himself, and able and good man as Sir John was, his shamefaced apologies for his friend and his exculpatory explanations of his too strong language all make me smile at his babe-like innocence. I wonder what Sir John would have said about James Fraser if Dean Ramsay, or some other of his Edinburgh correspondents, had been bold enough to send him a birthday gift of our intricate

and perpetually humbled autobiography. Alexander the Great always had his camp-bed made with Homer hidden under his pillow because of the incomparable battle-pieces in that book of battles. And Keble would have somehow found out James Fraser, and would have kept him under his pillow, had the Laird of Brea been in the Church of England, or even in the Church of Rome. But Scotland was 'Samaria' to Keble and to all the other Tractarians of those days. All the same, I know more than one old convert in Scotland who read that intricate book with their midnight lamp, and who find a true companionship in such frequent passages as these: 'I am perpetually humbled under the experience of my own sinfulness; till I creep nearer and nearer to God in Christ, and with more and more fervent faith and love every day and every night. And till I am drawn continually to walk closer and closer with Christ, endeavouring after His likeness in all my walk and conversation.'

In spite of Sir John Coleridge, and all such innocent and easily sanctified men, the Laird of Brea keeps on returning and returning to his deadly need of a more and more radical and more and more root-and-branch conversion all his days. 'I have been searching,' he says, 'into the Lord's ends with all this in my case. And I have come to this conclusion in this matter. I think He has taken these ways with me so that I might know something of the unspeakable plague of my own heart, and that I might be more and more humbled because of my continual departing from God. Also this I

think has been one of His ends with me: that I might be the better acquaint with His various processes and methods and His different styles of conversion, with which through my own somewhat hasty incoming I was not at that time so well acquaint. God does now, as it were, act my conversion over and over again. He convinces me more and more, not only of my actual and my open sins, but still more now of my secret and my soul-sins, of the plague of my own heart, and of that fountain-sin of my very nature, which carries me away from my God and from His holiness continually. He convinces me also that this is a matter in which I cannot really help myself, or redeem myself, or in any way cure myself, do all I can. And all that, till I am shut up to believe, and to trust, and to live in and on Christ as never before. And then in all that, that I might be the better able to guide and to direct such of His people as He is pleased to put under my charge at Culross or elsewhere.'

Now, speaking of Culross, what do you think? For my part, I cannot but think that it was by far their greatest blessing in this world to the people of Culross to have the Laird of Brea for their parish minister: that so difficult to convert and so intricate-minded man. And I think I know some of yourselves who would willingly have walked across the whole peninsula of Fife to have spent the week-end at Culross. We are told that Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood which the carpenters of Jerusalem had made for the purpose, and he read in the Book of the Law distinctly, and gave

the sense, and made the people to understand the reading. And exactly like that was the Laird of Brea in his pulpit of wood at Culross. He made his parishioners to understand the law of God through the law-work that was first in their minister's own heart, and then through all that in their own hearts. So much so, that all the people in that favoured parish who were already converted, and all those who collected into the parish kirk every Sabbath-day seeking conversion, would almost worship James Fraser as the people of Anwoth were already almost worshipping Samuel Rutherford. For on every returning Sabbath-day Fraser went up into his pulpit of wood and gave out such psalms and such paraphrases and selected such Scriptures and so drew out their deepest sense as to throw a divine light on the hearts of all his spiritually-minded people; till, like his favourite divine, Thomas Shepard of New England, Fraser would never have a Sabbath on which both he and his like-minded kirk-session did not expect some young converts to be added to the church, and some old backsliders to be restored to it. Now, may this pulpit of wood in which I now stand be like the pulpit of Ezra in Jerusalem and like the pulpit of Fraser in Culross! And may I and my colleague be your Ezra and your Fraser? And all that first to our own true and intricate and repeated and completed conversion! And then to the same completed conversion in you all! And all to the glory of God both in us and in you! Amen.

VI

'I WAS TOO LAZY TO ROAST WHAT I TOOK IN HUNTING'

OLOMON has Esau in his eye in the twelfth of the Proverbs. Esau was a very successful hunter, but then he was much too lazy to roast what he took in his hunting. Many was the dish of savoury venison that Esau shot down with his weapons and that Rebekah then took and roasted and served up to old Isaac. And Isaac ate of his son's venison, and said as he ate: 'See, the smell of my son Esau is as the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed.' Esau was not lazy in the hunt, only he would not take the trouble to roast what he had hunted. No not even when he was like to faint with hunger after a long day's success in the chase. Rather than light a fire in the field and then skin and gut and wash and roast and make ready his venison: rather than do all that for himself with his own hands Esau was willing to pay any price that Jacob demanded for the tempting dish of pottage that Jacob had got ready for his own

supper that night. Esau paid such a tremendous price for that smoking dish that a New Testament apostle says to all spiritually slothful men among ourselves, 'Lest there be any profane person among you, as Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterwards when he would have inherited the blessing he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.'

To begin with: one of our divinity students will be sitting with his feet on the fender and reading some of the masterpieces. And as he reads he comes, let us say, on Augustine concerning Cicero and the eleventh of Matthew; or on Luther concerning the righteousness of Christ in Romans and in Galatians; or on Hooker concerning Peter's fall and repentance; or he is reading *Measure for Measure*, when he comes on Isabella's splendid apostrophe concerning Him who is the top of judgment; or on Milton concerning the Temptation in the Wilderness; or on Coleridge concerning prayer. But our student sits still and reads on. Instead of rising from his seat and going to his desk and taking up his pen and opening his interleaved Bible and there setting down all those arguments and illustrations which are now due by him to his Bible and to his future pulpit, our young Esau has had the exhilaration of the hunt, but he has not taken the trouble to roast what he has hunted: he has not taken care that he shall have all the best results of his reading ready to hand when his future work shall need it all. There is an excitement and a

delight in hunting that there is not in roasting. And there is an excitement and a delight in sitting and reading on and on in a good book that there is not in rising up and securing by our own pen and ink what we have just read. But without taking such security on the spot a great deal of what we read is completely lost and cannot be recovered when our pulpit and our prayer meeting and our class would all be interested and enriched and edified by means of it. Without roasting, and all the other operations and processes connected with roasting, you cannot eat so as to take your needed strength out of what you have hunted. And no more can you without annotating and arranging and indexing your reading really make your own what you have read: however good, and however worthy to be remembered your reading may be. 'It must be added,' says Canon Mozley, 'that Newman did the same. He drew up a summary and an analysis of any book he read.' And Lord Morley says of Mr. Gladstone: 'On those Sundays he read Chillingworth and Jewel, and above all he dug and delved in Augustine. And he was no reader of the lounging, sauntering species; he went forward on a sedulous process of import and export; his was a mind always actively at work on all the matters that passed before it.'

Then, again, your experienced hunter does not rent again for next season the hills on which he found no deer last season; nor does he rent again the moors nor the woods in which he found no partridges nor pheasants nor hares. And no more does a true

student waste his money and his time on those disappointing volumes that supply him with nothing for his Bible and his notebook and his pulpit. Bishop Butler warns his readers against all those books that are 'no books': and against 'the too many books and papers of mere amusement.' 'By such books,' he says, 'time is happily got rid of without the pain of attention. Neither is any part of our time more to be put to the account of idleness than great part of that time which is spent in so-called reading. In this way,' he adds, 'people habituate themselves to let things pass through their minds, rather than think of them. Review and attention become fatigue; and to lay anything before them that requires review and attention is putting them quite out of their way.' 'During this time,' writes our present autobiographer, 'I lived in divers sins: and neglecting my books and misspending my time was one of those sins, and that was the cause of some other sins.' And of James Durham, a famous contemporary of Fraser's, our divinity students are told that 'so weighty was his pulpit upon Durham's mind that he was wont to say that if he had ten years longer to live, he would give nine of those years to hard study and would then on the tenth year come forth to preach.'

And, then, meditation: deep and long and close meditation is but so much immediate roasting of what we have just hunted down. Simple meditation sometimes is equal to so much copying out and indexing, and that without rising from our seat and without putting a pen to paper. And old

hands at meditation know instinctively and immediately just what things to take into their minds and hearts at the moment, and just what things to commit to pen and paper against the time to come. And all such old and experienced students are constantly 'finding tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.' Like Luther: 'At the Wartburg I followed the chase two days last week in order to get a taste of the pleasures that our fine gentlemen are so set upon. We caught two hares and a few poor roes. Truly a worthy occupation for idle men! Amid the nets and the dogs I pondered over some theological matters. I could not but feel sad at the deep mysteries that lay concealed under the gay scene. I managed to save a poor hare and hid her under my coat. But the dogs discovered her and bit her leg through my coat and choked her till she died. And thus do Satan and his dogs bite and kill the souls of men.' And again: 'Grace and peace, my honoured sir! When I was with you lately you did me the honour to take me with you to the hunt to try if the dizziness in my head might be dispelled by the fresh air and the exercise. As I sat in the carriage I went out on a spiritual chase and expounded to myself the 147th Psalm, which became to me the most delightful hunting-ground in which I ran down the noblest game. And having brought it home and having worked it out I send you what I got on your ground. Such game is wonderfully adapted for distribution among friends, for each receives the whole and no one is

defrauded.' That is how the great Reformer roasted what he took in his hunting.

And then our preaching and your hearing is just so much hunting and then roasting: or, if so be, so much hunting and not roasting. And therefore do not go away this evening saying to yourself and to others that the hunting turned out so poor to-day that there was nothing for you and your household to roast when you went home from the Sabbath chase. The poorest sermon you ever heard, I warrant you, had much more in it than you had the grace to take home. It is very poor cover where a good shot does not get a rabbit or two to take home and send down to the cook in the kitchen. Take them at their very best, your very best preachers are but so many gamekeepers and bushbeaters, whose whole office it is to bring the divine quarry within reach of your guns. But after the best keeper and the best beater has done his best for you and yours, you must attend better to what you hear than you have yet done, and you must take what you hear home with you better than you have yet done, and you must meditate more and better on what you have heard than you have yet done. And instead of exalting yourself before your children and in the hearing of your servants at the expense of the preacher, you must humble yourself to praise every sermon you hear and to point out to them its great qualities. And when your son, looking up to you, says to you, 'Father, was that a good sermon?' always say—at any rate till your son is grown up and is able to judge for himself—always say to him

what John Keble's father said to the future author of *The Christian Year*, 'My son,' said the wise old man, 'all sermons are good.' I know a father in Edinburgh—I will not say in this congregation—who so systematically ran down his ministers at every Sabbath-day meal that his dutiful son gradually and at last gave over going to church altogether. How it will turn out and end between that father and that son I am waiting to see. The truth is, my brethren, you might have Paul in this pulpit in the morning and Apollos in the evening, but if you did not pray all the way up to your pew and all the way down, the chiefest of the apostles, nay, the very Master of the Apostles Himself, would be but a savour of death to you and to your household: as He actually was to many censorious churchgoers in Jerusalem. 'O!' exclaims Thomas Shepard on the same subject, 'O! never shall you see any soul careful and teachable but he finds something for his salvation in every sermon.'

Our old fellow-townsman and fine student of letters, Dr. Hill Burton, has a delighful volume entitled *The Book Hunter*. And there are some men among us who are most successful hunters of old liturgies, and old litanies, and old prayer-books. They have possessed themselves of all the rarest editions of all the best devotional books in the whole world. They are known to have Maskell, and Palmer, and Neale, and Hammond at their fingers' ends. And they will be proud to let you see the most beautifully bound and the most stainless copies of the *Confessions* and the

Soliloquies, as also of Jacob Behmen's *Holy Week*, and Jeremy Taylor's *Golden Grove*. Andrewes also and Laud and Wilson and the priceless prayer-books of Edward and Elizabeth. And I will wager that at this moment both Mr. Thin in this city, and Mr. Baker in London, have orders on their books to be on the outlook for such and such a rarity of devotion, at any price. But when our prayer-book hunter again gets his heart's desire, what does he do with it? You would say that he will watch with it at least one hour on the night after he has got possession of the gem. I am not so sure as you are about that. At any rate he will keep you an hour with your mouth watering at the sight and at the cost of his treasures, and at the hunt he has had for them. Says old Shepard again about such a prayer-book hunter in New England: 'Though he has tasted the sweetness of the literature of prayer, there are times when he will rather risk death itself than take his prayer-book with him to his knees.'

To sum up in one word, and that one word is *sloth*. Sloth in the spiritual life is the last sin to be wholly overcome. 'The sloth and unprofitableness of my life,' wrote Manning, 'are only equalled by my vanity and self-complacency.' Now, to be true and to be plain on this matter with you all—I often wonder as I go on working among you if any of you ever attach any meaning or make any application to yourselves of those so urgent counsels and commands of which the Word of God is full. Those commands to be up and doing! To be on

your watch-tower of prayer night and day!—Sabbath and Saturday. To fight the good fight of faith every day! To hold the fort every day! To endure unto death! And, never, for one moment, to be found off your guard! What about all that? What does all that, or any single part of that mean in your individual case? Does it mean anything at all? Anything at all? The Captain of your salvation has not forgotten what all that meant for Him and what it all cost Him. Against what, then, do you fight in His strength? What fort do you hold in His name? Sloth, ugly word as it is, is it not the true name for most men's lives of religion among us? But to come back to Brea and to close with him. 'I hereupon find a great reluctance and resistance to all manner of spiritual duties. There is no truly spiritual duty about which I go, but I find my indwelling sinfulness ready to oppose and hinder me in it. And I get nothing of that kind done but over mountains of difficulties. For one thing, what an omnipotent work it is to pray aright and to pray enough. Oh! my sloth! Oh! my sloth!' Oh! our sloth also, all you, my friends! Our sloth in secret reading of the Word of God! Our sloth in meditating on what we read and what we hear. And, as all God's people will tell you, our sloth in secret prayer. 'Oh!' cries Calvin, 'what deep-seated malice against God is this, that I will do anything, and everything, but go to Him and remain with Him in secret prayer!' 'Our sloth,' exclaims another Calvinist, 'and our sheer stupidity

in secret prayer, is surely the last proof of our fall; of the depth of it, and of the uttermost misery of it!' How many of you have ever cast off your inborn sloth of spirit, and have ever given your whole soul to secret prayer? To prayer, say, like Jacob's, after his sin had found him out at the Jabbok? To prayer, say, like our Lord's, when our sin had found Him out in Gethsemane? To prayer, say, like Coleridge's, when his sin had found him out in his broken-down old age? Take Coleridge on his death-bed. 'My difficulty is to pray,' the philosopher said to his nephew. 'It is to pray as God would have me to pray, this is what turns me cold in my soul. Believe me, to pray with your whole heart and strength, with your whole reason and your whole will, and to believe, without doubting, that God, through Christ, will listen to your prayer, believe me, that is the last and the greatest achievement of the Christian's warfare on this earth. Lord, teach us to pray! And then he burst into a flood of tears, and begged me to pray for him.'

And now, O Thou who hearest prayer, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart concerning our hunting and our roasting in reading, and in writing, and in meditation, and in preaching, and in hearing, and in praying, let it all be acceptable in Thy sight, and profitable to Thy people, O my Lord, my Strength, and my Redeemer. Amen.

VII

'I WASHED MY FACE'

UR Lord never asks any of His followers to do anything that He does not first do the thing Himself, in order to show them the way to do it.

All His life long, our Lord was The Man of Sorrows; but His disciples never discovered that from anything He ever said or did. He was The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; but He did not appear unto men to be that; but only to His Father who saw Him in secret. All His days His face was set to go up to Jerusalem; but His followers never believed that He was going there; no, not even when He took them and told them in the plainest words possible, what was waiting Him there. In His own words, He so anointed His head and so washed His face, that He completely deceived His most discerning disciples all the time He was with them. He fasted and prayed in secret; but all the time His enemies were not without some ground for saying: Behold, a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber; a friend of publicans and sinners. John the Baptist came neither eating

nor drinking; but Jesus Christ came doing both. When the wine went done at the marriage of Cana, He filled the six waterpots up to the brim with the best wine that the governor of the feast had ever tasted. And he drank thereof Himself and so did all His disciples. And then on every highway He would make multitudes of mothers to be happy beyond all words as He took up their children in His arms and blessed them as if they had been His own. In short, He spread sunshine abroad wherever He went; while, all the time, His own heart was broken within Him. All His life long He practised to perfection what He here preaches. All you, who have any real interest in Him and in His ways, you should read, till you have it by heart, how He spent His last night before His Crucifixion. He knew quite well what was coming to Him on the morrow, but He spent that night as if to-morrow was to be His marriage-day. He made the night on which He was to be betrayed the most heart-comforting night to His disciples that they had ever spent, or ever would spend, in this world. All His talk at table His last night was about their great blessedness. It was all about the place He was to prepare for them. As one of them said afterwards, it was all about their inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them. The whole night was given up to the consolation of His disciples. While, all the time, He Himself was already on the accursed tree; with the crown of thorns on His head, and with the great nails in

His hands and in His feet, and with the soldier's spear in His side, and with His Father's great forsaking in His heart.

Now, when our Lord says to us that we are always to anoint our head, and to wash our face, He means us to understand that He would have us always to do as He did Himself. That is to say, He would have us to eat and to drink, and to go to all our entertainments and amusements and relaxations, with a smile on our countenances, even when there is a sword in our hearts. We are not to let the men around us so much as guess that there is anything the matter with us. We are on no account to expose God's sanctification-secrets to vulgar eyes. Commonplace men do not know, and they cannot be made to understand, what is involved in the sanctification of a sinful soul. They have not the faintest idea of what it is to have God's law entering the most sinful human heart. And thus it is that when you must eat and drink with such dull-witted and unimaginative men, you are to anoint your head and to wash your face as if you were as dull-witted and unimaginative as they are. In short, you are here called to a kind of holy hypocrisy everywhere, so to name it. That is to say, you are to use all your skill to cast dust in the eyes of the most lynx-eyed of men, till you make them think that you are anything and everything but what you actually are, in your broken heart and in your hidden life.

And not only in your entertainments and amusements are you to keep God's secrets with you well

hidden in your heart, but almost more in your prayers and in your praises and in the Scriptures you select to read in public. Attend to your Lord's petitions and pleas that passover night and you will be struck again to see that at the very moment when His enemies were sharpening their weapons and were selecting their cords and were lighting their torches there is not one syllable about Himself in all the seventeenth of John; not one syllable! Now, we must all imitate Him in that silence about Himself. We must not imitate James Guthrie of Stirling. For we are told that when that great Covenanter was in another agony of his sanctification, he was wont to pour out all his own secret sins and sorrows at the family altar, till his church-officer took him to task about that habit of his, and told him that his family worship was becoming simply intolerable. And told him to anoint his head and to wash his face so that he might not appear to his wife and his children and his servants and his guests that he had the two-edged sword so deep in his heart. And when you have had a specially bad day, as James Guthrie had so often, be sure you select a specially cheerful chapter to read to your household that night, and sing a specially joyful psalm. And then bid them all good-night with a beaming countenance. And then after they are all fast asleep, shut your door on yourself and your heavenly Father. And when once your door is securely shut, then let as many clouds come out on your brow, and let as many tears run down your cheeks as you like.

You are free now to pour out your blackest and most broken heart: as black and as broken as you like, and as long as you like. Only your head must be well anointed, and your face well washed, before you make your appearance at the breakfast-table next morning. 'My sore ran in the night,' says David. But that practised penitent took down his psaltery and sang the hundred and third Psalm at family worship next morning. And says Mr. Gladstone about our own sovereign: 'Her eyes told tales; but she smiled and put on a cheerful countenance.'

And, then, there will be this, in some cases. While you are the most approachable and affable and companionable and entertaining of men, all the same there will sometimes be a terrible loneliness and desolation in your own heart. The wise man says in one place that the heart alone knows its own loneliness. The thing was never better expressed; but I question if Solomon, with all his experience, and with all his wisdom, knew the half of the full solemnity of what he was saying. Lonely in heart, as all God's true saints have been, in all the dispensations, there is an inwardness and a secrecy and a loneliness and a desolateness in the saints of a New Testament experience, that have all drawn down the Holy Ghost Himself to be their only adequate Comforter. For,

> 'Not even the tenderest heart, and next our own,
> Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh.
> Thou knowest our loneliness,
> No stranger Thou to all our solitude.'

But to come back for a moment more to our holy hypocrisy—so to call it. And I have called it by that name because I cannot find a better name for what I have received to say to you this evening. Well, then, who and what is a hypocrite? A hypocrite, as you know, is a double-minded man. He is a man who smiles on you, and says sweet things to you, when all the time he would stab you to the heart, if he only could. He fawns on you and flatters you, when all the time it is simply poison to his peace of mind to hear any one appreciate you and praise you. He cheats you into thinking that he loves you; while, on occasion, he hates you like hell. And the fouler his heart is toward you, the more he anoints his head and washes his face when he has again to meet you, and to speak with you. Now, you are to be something like that. Your heart is very far from being right toward a certain man, and you cannot get your heart set right toward that man, all you can do. You are oftener on your knees and on your face about the state of your heart toward that man than he, or any one else, would for one moment believe. And, unavailing as your repentance and your prayers have hitherto been about your heart toward that man, you must go on till your death or his, praying for a clean heart toward him. And, till your prayer is answered, or till he is at your funeral, or you are at his, you must anoint your head every time you meet him, and wash your face.

But, in closing, there are some singular exceptions

—some singular and notable exceptions—to this universal rule of secrecy and silence in the life of sanctification. We see the strict rule and injunction of the text divinely suspended, and, indeed, wholly abrogated, in the chosen and conspicuous cases of such still unsanctified saints as David and Asaph and Heman and Isaiah and Hosea, in the Old Testament Church. And, again, in the conspicuous cases of such still unsanctified saints in our Scottish Church as Fraser of Brea, and Brodie of Brodie, and Halyburton of St. Andrews, and Rutherford of Anwoth, and Boston of Ettrick, and many more. And that otherwise universal rule of inward sorrows and outward smiles has been suspended and abrogated, in their cases, for the best of reasons. For this reason: that a secret language and a secret literature might be produced for the enlightenment and for the consolation of all those people of God who are under some such sanctification as those great saints were under. When one of God's deeply exercised saints—deeply exercised with their own sinful hearts, that is—when any such saint reads certain of David's psalms, and certain of Paul's chapters, and certain of Rutherford's letters, and Fraser, and Brodie, and Halyburton, they are able now to see that they are not alone, but that other men have been in the same awful experience. When Christian was in the valley of the shadow of death, and heard another man wrestling and praying in the same darkness, he took heart, and pressed forward till he overtook his brother pilgrim, and they then went

on together. So has it been with some of yourselves as you read David and Paul and Rutherford and Halyburton and Boston. Now, had all those sorrowful saints always anointed their heads and washed their faces, how desolate you would have been in the aloneness of your pilgrimage! If those great preachers and great writers had always seemed to you to be always full of all manner of light and peace and joy and holiness, you would have despaired and would have thought yourself a reprobate. But their *un*anointed heads and their *un*washed faces have been revealed to you in order that you may have hope that He who guided them to tell you how they were afflicted, and then were delivered, will so deliver you, after He has sufficiently afflicted you. Those priceless books of experimental religion that you hide under your pillow all night, while all manner of romances and love stories lie open on your table all day, those classics of the soul could only have been composed by God's greatly exercised and greatly gifted saints. And they were all composed for your comfort and consolation and encouragement. All you who read Paul, you see how often he writes with the ink of gladness in his pen, and that sometimes discourages you, because you cannot attain to that gladness, nor even come near it. But for your comfort and encouragement the Holy Ghost sometimes makes the Apostle change his ink. Instead of joy and singing Paul sometimes dips his apostolic pen into a bottle of tears and blood. Never did saint of God anoint his head and wash his face like Paul. But, all the same, on an occasion, he wrote the seventh of the Romans.

VIII

'UNLIKE PAUL, I WAS ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST'

ALL roads led to Rome in Paul's day. But Paul's own apostolic road had not as yet led him to Rome. He had long intended to go to Rome. Years ago he had laid his plans for that, saying: 'After I have been up to Jerusalem, I must see Rome also.' In those days everybody said that they must see Rome also. But Paul's great desire was not to see the great sights of Rome, nor to meet with the great men of Rome. Paul was so 'separated' to the Gospel of God that he had no interest in Rome nor in any other place on the face of the earth: no interest but the supreme and the all-absorbing interest of an apostle of Jesus Christ. Hear himself on all that. 'God is my witness, that without ceasing I make mention of you in my prayers. Making request, if by any means, now at length I might have a prosperous journey to come to you. For, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.'

Now what was it that led Paul to say that? Why did the apostle express himself in that exact way? Why did he use that peculiar expression and say that he was not ashamed to come to Rome and to preach in Rome the Gospel of Christ?

Well, if we would enter aright into Paul's mind when he says that, we must go back, as well as we can, to the Rome of Paul's day: and we must do our best to call up before ourselves Paul's exact circumstances. For Rome was Rome. All the kingdoms of this world met in Rome; all the kingdoms of this world, with all their wealth, and all their power; with all their wisdom, and all their learning; with all their most refined enjoyments, and with all their most revolting self-indulgences. All these things were concentrated and accumulated in Rome in those days. And then it was by that time the reign of Nero, when all these things were at their very worst and their very wickedest. It was to the Rome of Nero, then, that Paul was proposing to come; Paul, the most refined and the most blameless of men by nature and by upbringing; and now the saintliest of men by conversion and grace. And moreover he was proposing to come to Rome to preach Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ, whose very name was to the Jews an insufferable scandal, to the Greeks the uttermost of foolishness, and to the Romans, as often as they heard it, a great jest and a great byword. Paul was coming, the poorest, and the most persecuted of men to the mightiest and proudest city on earth, and he was coming as an ambassador of Christ

crucified. He was coming to demand the surrender and the submission and the obedience of all men to the Crucified: all men from the Emperor on the throne down to the most degraded slave in the city. All that was before Paul's mind when, with full deliberation, he wrote to the few Christian believers in Rome and said to them that he was not ashamed to come on that errand, even to Rome, where Satan's seat was.

'It is impossible,' says Spurgeon, 'for any of us to tell what it must have cost the Apostle to pen the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.' Now it is well to have that said for once, and said, too, in that strong and arresting way. For without its first fearful chapter, all the rest of Paul's magnificent Epistle would have been an edifice without a foundation. But for the sweeping and unanswerable indictment of the first and second chapters, the rest of the Epistle to the Romans might have been taken as the vain dream of a Hebrew prophet born out of due time, and beside himself with his fantastic Messianic visions. But with that unanswerable indictment and that tremendous denunciation, the rest of the Epistle comes to the right reader as the very Gospel of God Himself: as the very best and the very fittest message that heaven at its very best could send down to earth at its very worst.

Now, *mutatis mutandis*, it is the very same with the preaching of the Gospel in our own day. If a Pauline preacher in our own day would preach to all men's hearts the all-forgiving grace of God he must first bring home to all men's consciences the

all-condemning law of God. If he would offer aright the gift of God he must first charge home the wages of sin. Ay, and that not in a large and general and rhetorical way; but in a close and a personal and a home-coming way. He must, himself, increasingly experience and then increasingly preach the inwardness of sin, and the depth of sin, and the malignity of sin, and the spirituality of sin; and all that in a way that neither the common man on the street, nor the wise man of this world, knows anything about. And all that makes the office of the true Gospel preacher of our day so difficult to him at all times, and so full of shame and pain to him at some times. The open pollutions of Rome are swept away out of sight in our civilised day. But the depraved heart of man is still the same: of the wicked hearts of all men there is no difference, no difference at all, unless it is that all men's hearts have become more deceitful to their owners in our day, and thus so much the more dangerous. And to have to preach and press home on his hearers all that in our day is enough to make the boldest preacher among us somewhat ashamed, even when he knows that he is commissioned from above and is fortified from within. A Gospel preacher in our day had need to have his feet planted immovably on the law of God: and, at the same time, planted experimentally and unchallengeably on his own soul. Otherwise, he will be tempted to tune his pulpit to please a race of hearers who have not yet learned the first principles of the spiritual life.

But it was the Cross of Christ that was the peculiar and the crowning shame of the Gospel of Christ in Paul's day. To us the cross has become a fashionable ornament and an envied decoration. We wear crosses of gold and silver on our dresses at our feasts and at our dances. We erect crosses at our waysides and we ritualistically bow down before them as we pass them. We display far-shining crosses of copper and brass on the towers of our churches and our chapels and our schools. We cannot make too much of the cross in our day. And we must not be too severe on such wearers and worshippers of the cross as these. For it was Paul alone of all the apostles even, who had penetrated to the very heart, and root, and innermost meaning of the Cross of Christ. With his magnificent and unparalleled power of philosophical and theological thought, and then with all that thought experimentally tested and verified every hour of every day in his own great soul, Paul at last became the one and unapproached apostle of the cross. The shame of the cross sometimes quite overcame even the pillar-apostles of Jerusalem themselves, but never Paul. And thus it was that when the very best of the Twelve were somewhat cowed and abashed and ashamed of the full and perfect preaching of the cross, Paul goes away alone, travelling from Jerusalem to Rome, and from Rome to Athens, and from Athens to Corinth, determined to know nothing anywhere but Jesus Christ and *Him crucified*. And there is surely a great lesson in all that for all our

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preachers and all our people to this day. For there is an inwardness, and there is an absoluteness, and there is an abidingness, and there is an exclusiveness in the Cross of Christ, that is neither easily preached, nor easily believed, nor easily practised. To keep our own hearts shut up to the cross, and that not only at our first conversion, but to the end of our best sanctification, and to preach the cross always and to every one as the one and the alone ground of peace with God amid all the ups and downs of the spiritual life: that staggers many, and offends many, and it becomes, sometimes, a cause of shame and pain even to those who have succeeded Paul best in his revelation of Christ that God made to him, and who have also succeeded him best in his experience of all that.

'The cross! it takes our guilt away!
It holds the fainting spirit up;
It cheers with hope the gloomy day,
And sweetens every bitter cup.

It makes the coward spirit brave,
And nerves the feeble arm for fight;
It takes the terror from the grave,
And gilds the bed of death with light.

The balm of life, the cure of woe;
The measure and the pledge of love;
The sinner's refuge here below,
The angel's theme in heaven above.'

That is Paul's gospel of the cross and set to music so that we may sing it with grace in our hearts to

Him who died on the cross for all these ends and issues to us.

Now, my brethren, you will go to so-called Christian churches, both in town and country, where you would never discover that Paul's Epistle to the Romans had ever been written, and where you will never be put to shame with such old-fashioned doctrines as the imputed righteousness of Christ of which Paul is full. Christ's suretyship, and His substitution, and His finished work are not known in those churches. The imputation of your sin to the Lamb of God, and the imputation of His righteousness to you; no such offensive things are ever uttered there. Speak for yourselves, my brethren: speak for yourselves and make your choice. As for me, the longer I live—the longer I really live—these things, and the things they represent, are becoming every day more and more necessary and more and more precious to me. I know quite well, and I fully accept, that all these words of the Holy Ghost and of Paul and of evangelical theology are all but so many earthly words 'thrown out' toward heavenly things. Thrown out toward transactions far too tremendous even for the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. All these terms, the strongest, the boldest, and the most realistic come far short of fully describing and fully comprehending the tremendous truth of the atonement, and the correspondingly glorious truths of imputation and justification. Yes, they are strong meat, for they were prepared at first by a strong man: first for himself, and then for all those who

need them and will accept them. God knows, they are not too strong meat for some of us! Give some of us still stronger meat, and we will eat nothing else all our days. Even as our Lord said about the too strong meat He offered to the Jews: 'Murmur not among yourselves,' He said. 'For except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.' But, from that time, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. Many, but not all. Not you, nor I. For, neither our Lord to the Jews, nor Paul to the Romans, nor Luther, nor Calvin, nor Hooker, nor Owen, nor the Wesleys, nor the Haldanes, nor Chalmers, nor Spurgeon are one whit too strong for some of us. Some of us would take still stronger meat if we could anywhere get it. Nor Chalmers. For than Thomas Chalmers there is no more conclusive proof, and no more telling illustration, of the truths I am now attempting to utter. For years after he was an ordained parish minister Chalmers was downright ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; and he was continually made angry and intolerant as often as he met with it. Some of his godly people would have some of the great evangelical classics on their tables. When he was out among his people, he would see Baxter's *Saints' Rest* in one house, and Rutherford's *Letters*, in another house, and Newton's *Cardiphonia* in another house, and Romaine's *Life of Faith*, and *Walk of Faith*, and *Triumph of Faith* in another house, till in his bitter anger at such books he went

to his pulpit next Sabbath and denounced them with a heat and with a hatred that only Chalmers could command. But as Christ met Saul of Tarsus at the gate of Damascus, so did He meet the parish minister of Kilmany in his sickroom. Bereavement after bereavement were sent to Chalmers; death after death knocked at his door; and when all that did not suffice, the minister himself was laid down on what looked to him like his deathbed, as it almost was. Till he was born again on that almost deathbed. And till he came out of his sickroom a new man and a new minister. And one of the first proofs of the great change that had come to him was this: the humble and noble soul that he was, as soon as he was able to ascend his pulpit stair again one of the first things he did was to take back all his ignorant and disgraceful language about those evangelical authors who had been meat and drink to his spiritually-minded people all the early years of his unregenerate ministry. And then Dr. Hanna lets us see Chalmers all his after days reading and recommending and distributing the very doctrinal and evangelical and experimental authors he had formerly denounced and driven out of his people's houses. I have been going through Chalmers' great biography again, and I have been thanking God every day for Chalmers and for his Paul-like life. By far and away the ablest man in Scotland of that day, Thomas Chalmers will ever live a far-shining illustration of this text of Paul, his great forerunner and favourite apostle: 'I am no longer ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God

unto salvation to every one that believeth; and it is all that to me. For, therein, is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.'

There is just time to touch for a moment on two other occasions of shame that the preachers of the Gospel have sometimes to face and to overcome. And let Luther describe those two occasions to us. He was wont to be terribly put out when he had a very simple Gospel sermon in his mind and when he saw Philip Melanchthon and Justus Jones, the two great scholars, coming into the church. But at that hour of temptation Luther at once set the last day and the great white throne before his eyes, after which he went on to deliver the message he had prepared for the working men and the serving women and the 'prentice boys. And he had his reward immediately. For after the service was over who should come round to the vestry but both Philip and Justus, who would both declare solemnly that that was the best sermon they had ever heard from the lips of their friend, and that God Himself had spoken to their proud hearts that morning. Very good. But then, when Luther went home to his dinner, so puffed up was he with Philip's praise that his tongue would run away with him in his table-talk so that he would scarcely be able to finish his dinner for shame and remorse at himself; his conversation and all his conduct were so unlike his sermon. And all the week, watch and pray as he would, his life so ill-adorned his doctrine that they could scarcely get him to face his pulpit next Sabbath. John Bunyan, who governed his tongue

far better than Luther did, felt the same shame on many a Sabbath morning. 'Often, when I have been about to preach, and that upon some smart and searching portion of the word, I have found the tempter suggesting silence to me, and saying: What! will you have the boldness to preach that! That of which you are yourself so guilty! No: do not preach on that subject to-day. Or, if you do, mince it down somewhat. You know who is to be in the church to-day. But, I thank God, I never once consented to these suggestions of Satan. Let me die, said I, rather than water down the word of God!' Jacob Behmen also, Luther's greatest disciple, has the very same thing: 'Leave all these things alone, my sinful and ashamed heart would say to me. Leave malice alone, and envy, and hatred, and lack of brotherly love. For you are the fullest of all men of all these wicked things. Hold your peace, then, about all these wicked things. So I have often said to myself, till the truth of God would burn in my bones, and till I was compelled to speak out against all these things of which I myself am the most guilty.'

But now, after all that, don't you see, my friends, how all that shame and pain at themselves only made Paul and Luther and Behmen and Bunyan to cling and cleave all the more to Jesus Christ, as made of God to them, in all such circumstances, their wisdom, and their righteousness, and their sanctification, and their redemption, and, indeed, all that the New Testament and evangelical doctrine proclaims and preaches Him to be? Till

all those men went back to their family worship every night, and to their public worship every Sabbath morning, saying: 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. But, forgetting the things that are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord! I ashamed of the Gospel of Christ? Impossible! Absolutely impossible!'

IX

'MY BED-PRAYERS'

I FIND James Fraser, one of the saintliest of our Scottish Covenanters, always accusing himself concerning his bed-prayers, as he contemptuously calls them. And, coming so often on that severe self-condemnation of his, that set me a-thinking on the whole subject of the times and the places and the circumstances and the accompaniments of our best prayer. And I will now proceed to give you some of the results of my meditations, but more especially some of my consultations with other men, living and dead, on this all-important subject. Well, Bishop Andrewes, in the same century, would seem to have had something of our Scottish Covenanter's bad conscience about his bed-prayers also. For in his 'Act of Self-Examination before the Lord's Supper' he has this: 'Do I pray, if not seven times as David, yet, at least, thrice as Daniel? If not, as Solomon, at length, yet shortly, as the publican? If not, like Christ, the whole night, at least for one hour? If not on the ground, and in ashes, at least not in my bed? If not in

sackcloth, at least not in purple and fine linen?' On the other hand, all the psalmists were great men for bed-prayers. The psalmists of Israel would almost seem to have been in the habit of betaking themselves to their beds when they desired to have a special season alone with God. Witness this, for one instance: 'O God, Thou art my God. When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches, then my soul is always satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth always praises Thee with joyful lips.' Indeed, all up and down the Book of Psalms there are constantly recurring allusions to the night watches and to the recollections and the meditations and the adorations that the psalmists hold with God upon their beds. And our author's New England master was not so afraid of his bed as his so scrupulous Scottish disciple was. Indeed, the founder of Harvard would seem to have been in the habit of retiring to his bed like David, and of remaining in his bed of a morning, in order to meditate, and to praise, and to pray. As thus: 'When I was on my bed on Monday morning the Lord did let me see from my Sabbath work that I was nothing else but a mass of sin. But, then, my Redeemer suddenly revealed Himself to me, and did let me see that He has strength to succour me, wisdom to guide me, and mercy to pardon me, and that He is God's whole Christ to save and satisfy me. And then the night after, when I was in prayer and meditation, I saw that it pleased God that in Christ should all my fulness dwell. Feb-

ruary 25: At night, after lecture, I saw my vileness in my motives. The Lord made me see that no applause, but only shame, belonged to me. O Lord, I am destitute, but Thou wilt hear my cry. April 5: This morning I was in prayer on my bed, and the Lord greatly helped me to pour out my whole soul to Him. April 14: Having on my bed this morning seen how sweet a thing it is to be ever near the Lord, I greatly sorrowed over my vile nature, which is always haling me away from God who is the Fountain of all my good. September 8: I saw in my sleep that I was to act by a power supernatural, whereby I was to attempt things far above my own might, and was to bear crosses far above my own strength. September 17: This night I prayed that Christ would break out in far greater glory to my son than He had ever done to myself. And hereupon I was comforted about my son. November 10: Overnight I did question whether the Lord did call me on such and such a day. And in the morning, betimes in prayer, He called me mightily, and did say to me, Come and seek Me with your whole heart. And I did so, and found Him. November 15: On my bed in the morning I tried my heart, and asked myself who and what I would lean on the next time I had to preach. And I saw that my principal support was Christ, in whom I trusted.' And so on all through his secret book. The Bishop of Winchester also, with all his severe self-examinations, has his own great times on his bed. On the fourth day of the week he sets down this entry in the morning: 'I have meditated on

Thee and on Thy works, O Lord, in the night watches. From my bed I have seen Thy great works in the heavens, and have said: Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who madest the sun and the moon, those two greater and lesser lights, and the stars also, for light, for signs, for seasons—spring, summer, autumn, winter—days, weeks, months, years, to rule over day and night.'

And, then, over against our Scottish author, I find that Teresa of Spain, that ablest and holiest of women, has this. She does not accuse herself about her bed, for these are her exact words: 'For myself,' she says, 'I find that comfortable postures are best for my meditations and for my mental prayers.' Then, again, to leave the beds of the great saints, and to enter on their devout days, I find that both Father Faber and William Law, when I consult them, greatly recommend the dressing hour in the morning. And the author of *The Serious Call*, especially, enters into that hour with a point and with a power that his devotionally-minded readers can never forget. As soon as he awakes again he always says: 'When I awake I am still with Thee.' And what led him to form that habit, or, rather, what drove him to form that habit, was the way that yesterday and yesternight were wont to spring upon him before he was well awake next morning. The shameful falls of yesterday, the unadvised words that he spake yesterday, and the unadvised deeds that he did yesterday, all came back with a rush upon him next morning. Yesterday, with all its evil conscience, used to sit all night at William

Law's bedside in order to leap at his throat as soon as he should open his eyes, till he was taught to be beforehand with his evil conscience by coming to himself every new morning in the gracious presence of his God. Then after that, when he plunged himself into his morning bath, he always said: 'There is a fountain filled with blood!' And when he washed his hands and his face he almost worshipped the water, that so beautiful and so beneficent gift of God, as he saw it proceeding down to him out of the throne of God and the Lamb. His very towel also was made sacramental to him as he repeated to himself how their Master washed His disciples' feet and wiped them with the towel wherewith He was girded. And so on, that man of such intellectual distinction and such true spiritual genius. Then, again, on consulting him, Jeremy Taylor would have me tell you that some of the most ancient litanies were always said by the worshippers when they were walking, not kneeling, nor sitting, nor lying, nor standing, but walking abroad. 'And all that variety,' says that most eloquent of Englishmen, 'is but another ornament in the praying man's robe, clothed with which he enters in every way into the Divine presence.' Then, again, some men who pray and praise without ceasing have very heavenward moments at every meal. Writing to Thomas Corbet, one of his Anwoth parishioners, Samuel Rutherford says: 'I never once eat that I do not pray for you. We shall meet and sit down together and eat and drink and return thanks in our Father's house before very long.' And then in a pastoral

letter to the whole parish he writes: 'I do not eat, I do not drink till I have again prayed for you all.' What a falling off from that is all our breakfast and dinner and supper tables, where the last thing we think of is to mean and to feel what we pretend to say! Among the men, living and dead, whom I have consulted I find some who meditate, and adore, and pray, and praise best on their beds, like David; some when they are dressing, like Faber and Law; some when they are walking alone in the country, like Isaac; some on horseback; some in a railway carriage on a long journey; and one of my correspondents when he is on a long sea voyage, from Dover to Calais, and from Liverpool to New York. And so on. There is no hard and fast rule. Men's minds and hearts and habits so differ. And God is so near, and is so multifarious, and is so multitudinous toward His people in all His merciful ways with them.

Then, again, the element of time in prayer is of the first importance. We do not give ourselves time enough to get the full good out of our devotions. We are up and away from them before the answer has had time to come down. Swift as Gabriel can fly, we are no longer there when he arrives. A doctrine, a promise, a psalm, a hymn, take some time to get a proper hold of our hearts. And yet we are always complaining that our devotions are so dry to us, and that our prayers are so unanswered to us, when we do not give God sufficient time to answer them. Will you think about that the next time you are alone with Him?

There is a page in the *Private Devotions* that is fitted to give us food for thought in this whole matter. I will copy it out for you. It is this: 'Always, like our Lord. Without ceasing, like Paul. At all times, like Paul. He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, that is to say, Daniel. Evening and morning and at noon will I pray and call aloud, and Thou shalt hear my voice, says David. Seven times a day do I praise Thee, says David again. In the morning, a great while before day, it is written of our Lord. At day-break, like David. The third hour of the day, like Peter. The hour of prayer, the ninth hour, like Peter and John. At eventide, like Isaac. By night, like the servants of the Lord. At midnight, like David.' With all that, some men of prayer have no set time in their devotions. Brother Lawrence, that great expert in prayer, had no set times. The times that were set him for prayer by his superiors did not differ with him from other times. He retired, indeed, to pray according to the rules of the house, but he did not need that retirement, because his greatest tasks did not divert him from prayer; rather otherwise. His view of prayer was nothing else but a sense of the presence of God, so that when the appointed times of prayer were passed he found no difference, because he still continued as he was. 'The time of business,' says he, 'does not differ with me from the time of prayer; and in the clatter of the kitchen, while several persons are at the same moment calling for

different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the Blessed Sacrament.' And, again, in a letter: 'Be not discouraged by your repugnance to prayer. It is your fallen nature to feel that repugnance. But you must do yourself violence in that matter. Often, at the outset, you will think it lost time; but go on despite of all your difficulties.'

Some weeks ago an enterprising London editor sent out a request to a large number of well-known men asking them to tell the public through his paper what expedients they fell on when they were afflicted with sleeplessness. Among the devices they employed, some said the multiplication table till they fell asleep, some counted up to a thousand, some repeated old ballads, and so on. It was a doctrine of the Jewish Fathers that when any son of Jacob could not sleep he was to say the 63rd Psalm till he fell asleep saying it.

Then, again, the Hearer of prayer has laid down no law as to our attitudes in prayer any more than about our times and our places. We find some of His best remembrancers being heard and answered when they were on their knees; others when they fell down on their faces; others when they were lying on their beds; others when they were standing on their feet; and others when they were walking in the fields. Let every individual man therefore be a law to himself in that matter. There is no virtue in any attitude, but only so far as this attitude or that is found to assist the devout man and rightly to affect his mind and his heart.

With his wonted good sense John Calvin dwells upon that in many places. 'The attitude is quite immaterial,' he says; 'only let every man say and do in this matter according to his own circumstances and his own experiences.' The greatest of the commentators is most excellent upon that in his exposition and application of Daniel. The captive prophet opened his windows toward Jerusalem when he prayed. But why did he do that? asks Calvin. For what end did he do that? Not with a view to God, no; but with a view solely to himself. God was in Babylon as well as in Jerusalem. But to open his windows toward the far-off temple greatly inflamed the captive prophet's heart, and that to a far greater importunity and perseverance in his prayer. Now if that so holy and so acceptable servant of God needed the stimulant of an open window, let us not be slothful in finding out and in applying to our cold hearts everything that will kindle them into a Daniel-like devotion. So far John Calvin.

Now, my brethren, what do you say to all that? Does any part of that truly describe you? Or is all that a strange land and a strange language to you? No! God forbid! not to all of you. What, then, are your bed-prayers? What is your most frequent scripture, and psalm, and hymn on your bed? In an old Hebrew book we read that the Jewish doctors who catechised the child Jesus in the temple were wont to tell their disciples never to lie idle on their beds, but always to fall asleep saying the 63rd Psalm. Mrs. Carment of Rosskeen

used nothing but the 51st Psalm every night till she was eighty years old. Then when you are dressing, how do you occupy the time? When you enter on a confidential correspondence about these matters you come on strange experiences. For instance, one of my friends tells me that nothing prostrates him before the God of holiness and love like his morning newspaper. Another of my correspondents has six children. And it is his rule to give to each of them, in turn, one night a week, in secret prayer. And what struck me most if for any cause he misses a night, he falls back on that great text for fathers: 'In Thee the fatherless findeth mercy.' Again, when Sir Thomas Browne would be driving through the streets of Norwich to visit his patients, he never passed a church of any denomination that he did not lift his hat and pray for the minister and the people of that church. And you will not forget Samuel Rutherford's happy habit at every meal of his.

But enough, and more than enough, for one Sabbath evening. Only begin to pray as you will wish you had begun when you are on your last bed, and have not all your life on earth learned aright to pray. Pray without ceasing, while the way is still open to the mercy-seat. Hitherto you have asked nothing. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you; even the whole treasure-house of God. For all things that are really worth asking for are open to him who lives a life of prayer.

X

'MY SILENT PRAYERS'

YOU will perhaps remember that we had a meditation the other Sabbath evening on what David calls his bed-prayers. And now I propose another meditation with you this evening on what he calls his silent prayers. For, again and again, the Psalmist employs that remarkable expression about certain of his prayers in certain circumstances of his life. Though, somewhat unaccountably, our translators have always relegated that striking expression of the Psalmist's to the margins of his Psalms. And therefore I propose to rescue those so suggestive words from that ill-deserved and unfortunate obscurity, and to take them for my text this evening. 'Be silent to the Lord,' he says first to himself and then to us; 'Be silent, sometimes, to the Lord.'

One thing that had made David to be very far from silent to the Lord in the past, was the great prosperity and the unbroken success of bad men and bad causes, and, on the other hand, the constant defeat and the constant adversity that attended good men and good causes. David con-

fesses again and again that he had fretted himself far too much—it is his own word—over that dark dispensation in the past. Again and again, in many Psalms, he admits that, and he regrets that. And even yet he is far from being so silent in that matter as he ought to be. But he is at last learning silence in that matter. And that gives the most living interest and the most impressive teaching to every successive verse of this so self-accusing Psalm. The thirty-seventh Psalm would have been a tremendous indictment of the unrighteous government of God, were it not that all through this so powerful piece the Psalmist is all the time directing his passionate argument in upon his own heart, in order to teach himself the most absolute submission and the most complete silence among the many mysteries and perplexities of divine providence. And our own lesson out of all that is this: As David's painfully discontented Psalms were not rejected of God, and were not shut out of Holy Scripture, no more will our most embittered and most rebellious prayers be set down against us if we are coming at last, through them, to learn to be silent about the darkest providences of God in our own lives; to learn silence, and to practise it, as David at last came to do.

But the silence of submission and resignation is to be learned and is to be observed among many more matters than the perplexities and the crosses of our daily providences. A godly man's past sins will sometimes so come back upon him as to shut his mouth even from prayer for the good things

that would have been his but for his former sins. Moses is the great instance of that. Moses would have had the great honour and the great happiness of seeing the children of Israel settled in the land of Canaan but for his great sins against God and the people in the day of his provocation and his temptation in the wilderness. But, great friend of God and great servant of God as Moses was, he was most peremptorily told to hold his peace from prayer in the matter of his greatly desired entrance into the promised land. 'Speak no more to Me about that matter,' said God to His servant, in some anger at him for his so importunate and so persistent prayer. And He who was Moses' God, and who is our God, He will sometimes say much the same thing to some of ourselves, on some such occasions. 'No!' He says, 'it is not to be! Speak no more to Me about that matter! You are not to get it! There is that in your past life which will not indeed cast you out of your heavenly inheritance, but you must learn to be silent about that earthly thing that would certainly have been yours but for your great trespass.' Still, even so, silenced as you are in that way about that matter, your mouth is not shut in all respects even about it. You can open your mouth about that matter with Jeremiah, if not with Moses. For this was the way that Jeremiah took all his sore chastisements for his past transgressions. 'Wherefore doth a living man complain,' he nobly reasons with himself, 'a sinner for the punishment of his sins? Let us

search, and try our ways, and turn to the Lord. The crown has fallen from our head; woe unto us that we have so sinned! For this our heart is faint, and for these things our eyes are dim. Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days with Thee as of old.' Go you to God with that prayer and it will never be said to you: 'Speak no more to Me about that matter.' No, never; if you go with Jeremiah and make his confession and his supplication.

Then there is the kind of silence that fell even upon Paul himself sometimes in his life of prayer. A silence that he describes to us in these never-to-be-forgotten words: 'We know not,' he says, 'what we should pray for as we ought.' Often when the apostle was on his knees a great silence would take possession of his mind and his heart, till he would remain dumb before God for hours at a time. Before he began to pray he thought he had so much to ask both for himself and for others; and he thought he had such arguments that he would move both the mind and the heart and the hand of God with the urgency of his appeals. But when he knelt down a thousand things rushed in on his mind, a thousand things that quite paralysed his utterance. His ignorance of what was really, in the long-run, best both for himself and for his friends: his recognition of the height, and the depth, and the labyrinthine intricacy of divine things: the felt impetuosity and the over-heated state of his own heart, and so on: all these things so rose before the apostle's mind that his

hour of prayer often ended with a succession of groanings that could not be uttered; dumb groanings rather than articulate petitions and requests.

And we are often exactly like that ourselves, are we not? We find ourselves struck dumb on our knees, sometimes, when a great perplexity, and a great fear, and a great reverence take hold of our hearts. And when, as Paul has it, we know not what, exactly, we should pray for in this matter, as we ought. Groans are neither audible prayers, nor are they perfect silence. But, at the same time, they partake of both. And it is a very blessed thing to think that when we can utter nothing but groans about ourselves, that God both interprets our groans to Himself and accepts them and accepts ourselves along with them. According to this so consoling and so reassuring scripture: 'Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.' That is to say, our groanings in prayer are really not our own. They are rather the groanings of the very Spirit of God Himself, making such divine intercession, both within us, and for us. How wonderful, my brethren! How amazing! And, above all, how gracious! That we should have one Divine Intercessor in our hearts, and another Divine-human Intercessor for us in heaven! How blessed are we!

Then, again, there is the silence of a full and a sure expectation. This will have happened more

than once to some of you who are praying people. After you have importuned and implored God for something for years and years: first in pleading and pressing on Him all His promises that you could lay hold of: and then after a time of groaning that you could not utter you will sometimes have come to this. Some day, some night, some midnight, when you are on your knees before God, you will all at once feel your tempest-tossed heart to be strangely quieted, and strangely calmed, and strangely strengthened. You have not got your answer indeed. And your need of that answer is as great and as pressing as ever it was. But all the importunity, and all the impetuosity, and all the impatience are, somehow, clean gone out of your heart: so has the peace of God been shed abroad in your heart. Like David you are now silent to God in that whole matter. In describing himself in his 25th Psalm, David exactly describes you as you now are. He knows that his prayer is now with God. He knows that his case is being fully considered by God. And that has relieved his heart of all undue solicitude and of all unbecoming urgency. So much so, that from a life of the most importunate and painful prayer he gives himself wholly up henceforth to a life of silent expectation. It is David's own remarkable word, 'expectation.' Be like David, my brethren. He tells you his story because he knows that you are like himself and that you will be willing to learn his lesson. Always, then, like him, after you have spent a lifetime of prayer that God alone

fully knows, take this way of it: be silent, and leave yourselves, absolutely, in God's hands. And, instead of your former loud and importunate and peremptory prayer, rather sing than pray henceforth. And let your song be these golden lines of David to his psaltery:—

'For Thou art God that dost
To me salvation send;
And I upon Thee all the day
Expecting do attend.'

Yes: so sing. For there is no more blessed state of mind on this side heaven itself than just this: 'I expecting do attend.' And, then, when the actual answer comes, there will be no happiness in all the world like yours, when you are able to look at your undoubted answer, and to say concerning it: 'Lo! this is my God! I have waited for Him, and He has heard me, and has come for my salvation.'

Writing to a correspondent of his, of whom Andrew Bonar says that he must have been a man of thought and education, Samuel Rutherford winds up a letter about prayer with this somewhat scholarly sentence: 'Words,' he says, 'are but the accidents of prayer.' The reader often comes on abstruse-looking sentences like that in Rutherford. And they recall us to the whole truth about that so remarkable man. Rutherford was not only the sweetest letter-writer of his day, or indeed of any day, but he was also one of the best classical scholars of his day, and one of the most powerful reasoners and logicians of any day. And

he had among his correspondents both men and women who quite well understood his most learned utterances and allusions. Now if you have a son or a nephew or any young friend at the logic class, you might start an excellent Sabbath conversation at table to-night just by asking him what the great Covenanter means when he says that words are but the *accidents* of prayer. And your scholar will explain to you that in logic an 'accident' means something that is not of the essence of a thing. An 'accident' he will explain, means something that is usually found closely connected with a thing, but, all the time, it is not necessary to the complete existence of the thing. A thing can quite well exist without any of its 'accidents.' As here; words are not of the essence of prayer; no, not even the words that the Holy Ghost teaches. You can offer the most perfect and the most prevailing prayer without any words at all. Words are necessary where the whole *mind* prays. But the whole *heart* can pray without a single word being uttered. The heart is the seat of faith and of love and of trust and of desire and of hope and of expectation. And all these graces of prayer may be in the liveliest exercise without a single word being found in your mouth. You will sometimes have a prayer in your heart for which you can find no words, either in David, or in Paul, or in the English Prayer Book, or in John Knox's *Liturgy*, or in Bishop Andrewes' *Private Devotions*. And when that is the case, just lift up your silent and speechless heart. Just lift up your believing,

loving, trusting, hoping, expecting heart. Just lift up your hand, just lift up your eye, and you have in that prayed to perfection. 'Yes,' said the great evangelical and devotional casuist to his perplexed correspondent; 'Yes, we usually employ the words which the Holy Ghost teaches; but, after all, even His words are but the accidents of prayer; they are not of its very essence.' For

'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.

O thou by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself has trod;
Lord, teach us how to pray!
Amen.'

XI

'BUT I ABHORRED AND WAS AT ENMITY WITH MR. BAXTER, AS A STATED ENEMY TO THE GRACE OF GOD'

JAMES FRASER of Culross, and Richard Baxter of Kidderminster, did not take the same view, exactly, on the matter of their justification. The Scottish divine said that if antinomianism was an error at all, yet it was an error that 'lay very near truth.' Whereas, the English author of the *Aphorisms* was so set upon preaching and pressing home the absolute necessity of a holy life, that he seemed to some to lay far too little weight on the sovereign grace of God, and on the imputed righteousness of Christ. It was an age of great logical acuteness, and that acuteness was sometimes so carried into certain regions of religious truth as to make the simplicity of the Gospel to partake far too much of the refinements and the subtleties of the dialectical schools. And far worse than that, this minute rigidity of doctrine, and the argumentative temper

that too often accompanied it, produced the most deplorable results in practical religion and in personal morals. As when the author of the *Bass Rock Treatise on Justifying Faith* denounced the author of *The Saints' Rest* as a stated enemy to the Grace of God, and declared openly that he abhorred him, and was at enmity with him. Speaking for myself on this matter, I lean with all my weight on James Fraser's doctrine of the evangelical faith that alone justifies the ungodly: but I turn away with the deepest distress from the scandalous language that he uses against the author of the assailed *Aphorisms*. Referring to an atrocious placard issued against him at an English election, Mr. Gladstone said that such things, openly published about a man, were enough to make his blood to freeze in his veins. And to read what James Fraser wrote and published about him was surely enough to make Richard Baxter's blood to freeze in his veins. That being so, just listen to the way that the greatest of all the Puritan peacemakers answered our fierce-blooded Covenanter. Pursuing the noble argument of the noblest of his books, Baxter says: 'We shall then rest from all our sad divisions, and from all our unchristian quarrels with one another. Paul and Barnabas are now fully and for ever reconciled, and no sister's son shall ever separate them in heaven. There God's saints are not any more in conceit with the issues of their own brains; but all are now admiring the Divine Perfection, and are in the most self-forgetting love with one

another. Where the saints of God rest there is full and entire reconciliation between the Lutheran and the Calvinist, between the Remonstrant and Contra-Remonstrant, and between the Conformist and the Nonconformist; indeed, these names are not known in that language. There is no recording there of our neighbours' infirmities, and no raking up there of old sores that Christ died to heal. How many sermons zealously preached, how many books studiously compiled, will then be all disclaimed by their ashamed and penitent authors. In the New Jerusalem there is no deep plotting to strengthen our own party, nor any deep designing against our redeemed brethren. And, is it not a sin and a shame that our course on earth is so contrary to what it will be in heaven? Surely, if there be shame and remorse in our Father's house, it will be when we meet and look in one another's faces. Even as Joseph's brethren were overwhelmed with confusion when they beheld their brother, whom they had, at one time, so shamefully wronged.' I wonder what James Fraser felt when he read that passage in his copy of *The Saints' Rest*, or did he refuse to buy and read or even look at that book of the man whom he had so shamefully abused? At any rate, we refuse to read the writings, or even to hear the names, of the men we have shamefully abused. It is long since Tacitus detected himself and accused himself of hating all the men whom he had ever hurt. With all our communion-season self-examinations have we come up to Tacitus' discovery and confession of his inhuman sin?

But we do not need to go so far back as to Tacitus, or even to Fraser, in order to see what party spirit can do in the diabolical way of one Christian man hating and reviling another. There has never been a religious or a political controversy, in any age, which has not exhibited that deplorable spectacle. Controversy is, perhaps, unavoidable as long as men do not see eye to eye in doctrine and in duty. But party spirit, and its malevolent mind, surely ought not to be unavoidable among truly Christian men. Well, then, as we would love one another, and thus please Him who made us and redeemed us to that end, let us put away from among us every cause, and every occasion, of party spirit and ill-will; and, especially, let us put all that away from within the Church of Christ. God knows, there will always be plenty of cause, and of occasion, for party spirit and ill-will among men; even if these bad passions were at once, and for ever, cast out of the Church of Christ! For one thing, as long as the king's government is carried on by the party system, and as long as the human heart remains what it is, we shall always have men abhorring, and hating, and reviling one another; the shame, and the scandal of which we cannot but see and hear every day we live. But, in God's Holy Name, and in the strength of His Holy Spirit, let us determine to banish all party spirit, and all party strife, with all their disastrous results, out of that kingdom which is set up on His earth to be peace, and righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost. All which is our prayer at the present

moment, and at the same time it is our effort at the present moment, as it has never been before in the whole history of the Church of Christ in our beloved land.

As you are all aware, a step has been taken this year, such as has never been taken before; a great step towards the banishment of controversy, and party spirit, and envy, and ill-will out of the Church of Christ in Scotland. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the General Assembly of the United Free Church of Scotland, have both appointed large committees, and have instructed them to meet together, and to confer and inquire together, and to report to their respective Assemblies, as to what are the causes that keep those two Churches from being one Church and one Assembly. Now, the great difficulty with those two committees, and, then, the great difficulty with the two Assemblies, as it seems to me, will be to decide on what they are to direct their special attention, and to carry on their inquiries and to conduct their deliberations. They may be tempted to look only, or to look too much, on the admitted obstacles that stand in the way of union; and to look too little on what lies beyond those obstacles. Or, on the other hand, they may be led to look with such an overmastering desire on what lies beyond all intervening obstacles, as to make them determined to surmount all such obstacles whatsoever, and to surmount them at all costs. When the Northern tribes of Europe had once tasted the wonderful wines of Italy, they

could take no rest till they had scaled the Alps, with all their immense obstacles of rocks and snows, and had taken possession of the vineyards and oliveyards of the South. And, if the two negotiating Churches have tasted enough of the divine wine of a true and a pure brotherly love, then it may safely be predicted that no opposing obstacle whatsoever will continue to keep them apart. There are many motives of many kinds, in the minds and hearts of Christian men among us, moving them towards such a union. There is the consolidation, and the efficiency, of the whole work of the Churches; there is the great saving of men and money that would result from such a union; and there is the harmonious re-adaptation of the Churches' life and work to the pressing necessities of the land. A great forecast is in many men's minds, of what could be done for the whole people of Scotland if those two great Churches were one Church, in counsel, and in work, and in worship. All these motives are in my own mind; and they are making me to pray and to hope for a speedy union of both the Churches concerned. But, if I were to tell you the whole truth about myself in this matter—it is the motive of the text that moves me the most. In the honest and plain-spoken words of the evangelical prophet, his motive was—God's own motive was—that 'Ephraim shall no more envy Judah, nor Judah any more vex Ephraim.' Now, I am so full of those two vices of envy and vexation myself, that I would fain live a little longer to have them, and

all of their evil kind, for ever rooted out of my heart; and that by a union that would sow the seeds of a universal brotherly love in my heart in the room of those deep and ineradicable roots of bitterness that so often spring up to torture me. William Law has taken my portrait in this matter, as well as in so many other matters: 'Selfishness and partiality are very inhuman and base qualities,' he says, 'even in the things of this world; but in the things of religion they are of a still baser nature. Now, this is the greatest evil that the division of the Church has brought forth; that it raises in every communion a selfish, partial orthodoxy, which consists in courageously defending all that it has, and in absolutely condemning all that it has not. And thus every champion is trained up in defence of their own truth, their own learning, and their own Church, and he has the most merit, and the most honour, and the most reward, who likes everything, and defends everything among themselves, and leaves nothing uncensured in those of a different communion. Now, how can truth and goodness and union and religion be more struck at than by such defenders as those? And our laying all this to heart will enable us to live in a divided part of the Church unhurt by its divisions; and it will keep us in a true liberty and fitness to be edified and assisted by all the good that we hear or see in any other part of the Church. And thus uniting in heart and spirit with all that is holy and good in all the Churches, we will enter into the true communion of saints,

and become real members of the Holy Catholic Church, though we are, for the time, confined to the outward worship of only one particular part of that Church.' So far the author of *An Appeal to all those that Doubt and Disbelieve.*

But there are able men, and honest men, and peace-loving men in both the Churches, who will see, and will say, that there are fundamental principles; and, indeed, plain and evident Scriptural truths that stand right in the way of this proposed union. Principles and truths for which our fathers in both the Churches have often contended and suffered; and that to death itself. So there are. And we are to let those principles and those truths have their full place given to them, and their full honour paid to them, in all our negotiations. But, while all that is so, and must remain so, James Fraser has a fine passage elsewhere, in which he teaches us that there are 'principal substantial truths,' and that there are 'subordinate truths'—though he sadly forgets his own sound doctrine when he comes to discuss with Richard Baxter. But, for my part, and, taught by James Fraser, and by still greater teachers than he, were there far higher Alps, both of principal and subordinate truths than there are standing in the way of this union, I would do all that lies in my power to scale both those principal and subordinate Alps for the sake of the vineyards that lie beyond them. For, when all is said, both truth and principle, at their very best, are but the servants of love, and are not to be allowed to stand in the

sovereign's way, but are there to advance her way. The highest truths and the deepest principles are but the ministers of love; and they are in their truest and safest places when they hasten, at all times, and in all places, to feed her heavenly flame. Philip Henry well said that 'It is not the actual differences of Christian men that are the mischief; but the mismanagement of those differences.' My brethren, let us pray, and labour, and examine ourselves, as never before, so that we may have no hand in the mismanagement of this splendid movement! And, that it may be so with us, let us dwell, and with all our mind and with all our heart on what that same sweet writer says concerning the Church divisions of his day. 'Notwithstanding all the sad divisions in our Churches,' says the saintly father of Matthew Henry: 'the saints among us, so far as they are sanctified, are already one. The things in which they are agreed are many more, and are far more considerable, than are the things wherein they differ. They are of one mind concerning sin, that it is the worst thing in the world; concerning the favour of God, that it is better than life; concerning the world, that it is vanity; and concerning the Word of God, that it is above rubies.' Yes, the simple fact is, as Philip Henry says, we are one Church and one Assembly already, if we would only believe it, and act upon it.

Let Paul's noble paraphrase concerning charity, then, be the *agenda*, as the clerks say, of every meeting of those two committees. And let that same

apostolic paraphrase be imaginatively meditated on every day, by every member of those two committees, and by every one of ourselves. Let both the letter and the spirit, and the personal application of that heavenly hymn, be ever with us, and with all our fellow-believers everywhere. And, when that is so, all the opposing Alps of Christendom will soon sink into the earth; and will only the more help to make an highway for the coming chariot of the Prince of Peace. And, to borrow the eloquent words of Edmund Burke, 'on the lava, and ashes, and squalid scoriæ of our burned-out volcanoes, there will soon grow the peaceful olive, and the cheering vine, and the sustaining corn.'

XII

'I TOOK THE CUP OF SALVATION AND I CALLED UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD'

THE first time we meet with a cup in the Scriptures is in the story of Pharaoh's chief butler. 'In my dream'—so he told it to Joseph—'behold a vine was before me. And in the vine were three branches. And the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes. And I took the grapes, and I pressed them into the king's cup, and I gave the cup into the king's hand.' And from that the word cup came to mean the portion of drink, whatever the drink was, that was set down beside every man's trencher at table. And then, as the Scriptures proceed, and as the sense of the word in question enlarges and deepens and enriches, whatever there is of true good in any man's personal life it is called his cup. The Psalmist more than once employs the word in this experimental and spiritual sense, as in the sixteenth Psalm: 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and my cup; thou maintainest my lot.' And in the twenty-third

Psalm: 'Thou anointest my head with oil, and my cup runneth over.' But again a man's cup is sometimes taken for the sorrow and the sadness of his life, as thus: 'Therefore His people return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.' And again: 'O Jerusalem! thou hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of trembling, and hast drained it to its dregs.' And then, in something of the same sense, we have our Lord saying to certain of his more ambitious disciples: 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I am to drink?' And then there comes the supreme instance of this so expressive word: 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!' And then after that and out of that there comes to us this crowning sense of this so expressive word: 'This cup is the new Covenant in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins; drink ye all of it.'

'I will take the cup of salvation,' says David, 'and will call on the Name of the Lord.' The circumstances of that morning on the Mount, when the Lord descended and proclaimed His Name for the first time to Moses, were these: Moses had climbed the mount that morning with groanings in his heart that he could not utter. O wretched man that I am! Moses had cried to the God of his salvation, long before Paul took up the same lament in his New Testament experience. For by this time everything had gone wrong with Moses. Everything had gone into sin and misery with Moses. A whole world of sin and misery lies hidden behind the scene in Moses' tent when Zipporah cried out,

'Surely a bloody husband art thou to me!' And as if that were not enough to break Moses' heart, his sister Miriam, who had watched so faithfully over her little brother when he lay in his ark of bulrushes in the river, and who had worked so wisely as to get the outcast child put back again into his mother's arms; Miriam, the prophetess, who had led the women of Israel in their songs and their dances on the shore of the Red Sea: even Miriam had lived to break her brother's heart with her envies and her jealousies and her treacherous plots against him till God struck her with leprosy for her wages. And then, to crown all, Aaron, his brother, the high priest of Israel, had but yesterday fallen so far as to make a golden calf, and to lead the dissolute-minded people in songs and dances, so very different from the songs and the dances in which he had taken a leading part with his sister on the hither shore of the Red Sea. And then Moses himself, under all these private and public crosses, humiliations, and heart-breaks, had given way to an unbelieving and a rebellious mind, till he was the most heavy-laden and the most heart-broken man in all the tents of Israel. But Moses' extremity was God's opportunity, as it always is. And the Lord said to Moses, Behold there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And I will put thee in a cleft of that rock, until I have passed by. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with Moses there, and proclaimed the Name of the Lord: The Lord, the Lord God, merciful to the miserable, and gracious to the sinful, and long-suffering to the old, and abundant in good-

ness and truth to all, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. And Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped. And ever after that morning, as often as Moses was in any sin or any misery of any kind, he again made haste and called upon the Name of the Lord, and especially on every Passover Day. And so did all the psalmists and all the prophets and all the saints of God in ancient Israel, till every psalm and every sermon and every upper room in all Israel, down to the time of Christ, was made melodious with the Name of the Lord. Let the 103rd Psalm stand for a specimen of a thousand such psalms and sermons:—

> 'His ways to Moses, He His acts
> Made known to Israel's sons.
> The Lord our God is merciful,
> And He is gracious;
> Longsuffering, and slow to wrath,
> In mercy plenteous.'

All which is written for our learning, for our example, and for our encouragement, in whatsoever sin and misery our communion cup may find us this morning on our holy mount.

And then each several communicant this morning will select and will appropriate to himself that special Name of the Lord which best answers to his own case and to all his own circumstances. And, just as it was in Israel, so will it be with ourselves. Some communicants this morning will take the cup and will call upon God's long-suffering. Not only upon His mercy and His grace, but upon His

long-suffering also. 'I have been in a great trespass from my youth up,' sobbed a great saint, as often as he again took the cup. Now, though I have read that saint's recorded life again and again, and with great attention and with great sympathy, I have not the least idea what his lifelong trespass was. But I know some of my own. Do you know any of yours? If you do, the moment when the elder puts the cup into your hand, lift up your heart and say, 'O God, Thou art my God, and Thy Name to me, up to this day, has been Thy great long-suffering toward me. And with the cup of salvation in my hand will I once again seek Thy face and Thy long-suffering.' All you who are no longer young communicants, call upon your God in some such way as that. And who can tell but this very day He will arise and will break your lifelong bonds and set you free; set you free to a few years of holiness and of peace of mind and heart before you finally leave this table for the table above.

And all you who are old communicants might do this also. When you are in close communion with God at the table, you might ask in a holy confidence just what it is that He has in His mind in so lengthening out your unsanctified life on earth. He must have something special in His mind toward you, and with the cup of His salvation in your hand, He may deign to open His mind to you on this subject; the secret of the Lord has often been laid open to His saints as they sat near Him and were taken into His confidence at His table. And this has been one of His secrets with some of our old communicants. He

told them that He was sparing them so long in order to teach them what sin is, and what their own besetting sin is; to teach them by a long experience the unspeakable bondage and curse and pollution of sin. A holy message that so few, old or young, ever seem to learn. Then again, He spares some old saints of His to give them all possible time to do some good work for Him that He would like to acknowledge and to praise them for and to reward them for, both on earth and in heaven. And in some cases He spares them long that they may give more back again to Him out of the abundance that He has given them. But most of all, and best of all, and as including all, He lengthens out the life of some of His saints in order that Jesus Christ His Beloved Son may get something of His right place in their thoughts and in their affections before they are summoned up to take their seat in His presence at His table above. But no man can guess, or has any business to attempt to guess, what God will confide to you when you take the cup and call upon His proper Name for you, whether that name is merciful, or gracious, or long-suffering, or abundant in goodness and in truth. 'Here,' says that old scholar, William Gouge, 'here the psalmist useth the plural number, and says, "I will take the cup of salvations," whereby, after the Hebrew elegancy, he means many salvations, many deliverances, one after another, and passover after passover. Or, as the Bible style sometimes is, he may mean some great and extraordinary deliverance, which contains in itself a multitude of deliverances and of salvations.'

So that as God has many great Names, so every communicant is free to plead them all, if he needs them all; to say in all the plurality and fulness of God's great Name, 'Be merciful to me, and be gracious to me, and be long-suffering to me, and where sin has abounded, let Thy grace much more abound unto me.'

And then, lift up your heavy hearts, O all you who faint with your great thirst to drink the cup of your full and final salvation. Lift up your heavy hearts, for your full and final salvation draweth nigh. It is far nearer now than it was when you first believed and first began to take the cup and to call on God's Name. The day cannot be far away from some of you when your Saviour will put the cup into your hand for your last communion on earth, and when He will say to you that He will no more drink of the fruit of the vine with you, till He drinks it new with you in His Father's heavenly kingdom. Yes, lift up your whole heart in strong faith and in assured hope to the Table above! For, amid all the inconceivably blessed occupations and enjoyments of your Father's House, there will be returning communion seasons, so to call them, when your Saviour will have His Table spread, from time to time, and will say to you, 'Come and do this in everlasting remembrance of Me.' And as in grace here, so in glory there, you will take the cup of your salvation, and will call Him by all His Names! O my soul! what a communion day that will be! O what holiness! O what happiness! O what adoration! O what

ever-increasing and everlasting love to God and man!

And then there will be this also; in order to kindle your love more and more, and in order to enrich your song more and more, there will be this at every returning season of such communion in heaven. You remember what their Master said to His disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem? So when He had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said to them: 'Know ye what I have done to you?' It is not recorded what they said in answer to that question. But in our upper room in the New Jerusalem David will lead us in our answer, as he has so often led us in this house, and he will say, 'He sent from above, He took me, and He drew me out of many waters. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise to our God,' and all the Table from head to foot will say Amen! And after David Job will say, 'He took me from my dunghill, and He set me among the princes of His people, and He clothed me also with His spotless righteousness, and it was, and it will ever be, for a robe and for a diadem to me!' And after Job the evangelical prophet will rise up with the cup of salvation in his hand, and will proclaim and say, as he looks up to the Lamb: 'Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. For He was wounded for our transgressions, and was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace

was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.' And all the Table will believe his report, and will add that the arm of the Lord has been revealed to them also. And we will all turn and attend to Paul when he takes into his hand the cup of his salvation. For he will stand forth and will repeat his debt to Christ in the seventh chapter of his sanctification, and then will seal it up for ever with this evangelical seal: 'I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' When he, and all who hear him, will cast down their crowns before the throne of God and the Lamb. 'And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were for ever passed away. And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. For the marriage of the Lamb is come. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for all the former things are passed away.' And best of all, the Lamb of God shall then see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. And ever blessed will be His Name!

XIII

'THE CANAANITES WOULD DWELL IN THAT LAND'

IF you had visited the Land of Canaan, the Land of Promise, the Holy Land, any time between its conquest by Joshua and the fall of Jerusalem, you would have found its great cities and its rich plains filled with the families of the chosen people. But if you had climbed up into its hill countries; if you had scaled its rocky fastnesses; if you had penetrated into its inaccessible strongholds, you would have found many unsubdued remnants of the aboriginal Canaanites still lurking there. The old, aboriginal, corrupt, and accursed Canaanites were never completely cleared out of the promised land. Even after the land was conquered by Joshua and his generals, and was divided among the twelve tribes of covenanted Israel, the original possessors of the land still harboured in their thousands in the hidden recesses of the land, and from time to time descended upon the fields and the vineyards of their conquerors to despoil them and to lay them waste. Sometimes, on occasion, they came down in their

falsehood and deceitfulness and proposed truces of peace and leagues of friendship. And there were times, still on record, when they so succeeded in deceiving the foolish Israelites as to get their sons and their daughters married into covenanted families till a race arose in Israel that was far more like the heathen castaways than they were like the circumcised seed of Abraham. And this went on till we have Hebrew prophets denouncing and condemning their own people in such ways as this: 'They did not root out the nations concerning whom the Lord had commanded them, but were mingled among the heathen and learned their evil works. And they served the idols of Canaan which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and the land was polluted with blood. Therefore was the wrath of the Lord kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance.' And again, 'Oh that my people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto Him, but their time should have endured for ever. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.' All which things, while they are only too true Old Testament history, are also a true forecast and allegory and illustration of the life of grace in the souls of some eminent New Testament saints. So much so, that the very best of New Testament

saints takes this very text and carries it over in as many words into his own agonised cry concerning his so invaded and so harassed and so often desolated life of sanctification. You will all remember the parallel passage: 'For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. . . . Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. But if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.' Could anything be more clear? Could anything be more impressive? Could anything come more home to our experience than first, the first chapter of the Judges, and then the seventh chapter of the Romans? How intensely interesting the parallel and parable is! How impressive! How fearful, indeed! But at the same time, blessed be God, how consoling!

Some of you will have discovered Bishop Andrewes' private devotion for the fourth day of the week, which runs thus: 'Defend me from Amorite pride, and from Hittite envy, and from Perizzite wrath, and from Girgashite gluttony, and from Hivite lasciviousness, and from Canaanite covetousness, and from Jebusite sloth. And give me humility, pitifulness, patience, sobriety, purity, contentment, and ready zeal.' That is a sample of the way in which the great preachers of old were wont to work the Bible accounts of the Canaanites into their experimental sermons. And that is a sample also of the way they both watched and prayed themselves and then taught their people to watch and pray. And I do not think I can do better by my text, or better by Paul, or better by you and myself, than just to

take the Bishop's syllabus and programme for our exegesis and our meditation and our self-examination this evening. Come, then, with me and let us take the pride of the Amorites first; that is to say, our own proud and unsanctified hearts. Well, it would sometimes be so that the Israelites would be busy in their harvest fields and in their vineyards, like our own Scottish husbandmen at this season of the year, when, suddenly, and without a moment's warning, a band of the aboriginal Amorites would swoop down upon them and would carry off the whole harvest to their mountain fastnesses, and would lay waste what they could not carry off. And exactly so is it sometimes with some of ourselves. We have conquered our own proud hearts so often, and at such a cost, that we say to ourselves, Surely, now, we shall be left in peace. Surely, at last, we shall be left alone to pursue our daily duty, safe from any sudden assault of our original and indwelling sin. But behold, suddenly, some day, the mere name of some man is mentioned in our hearing, or we read that man's mere name in print, or, still more mysteriously and unaccountably, there is some sudden uprising or down-rushing of this hidden evil of our hearts—God knows where it comes from!—and we are that moment laid low under the diabolical wickedness of a proud and a haughty and a revengeful heart. That man once so offended us, he so humiliated us, he so despised us, he so passed us by, and so preferred another to us, he so found fault with us, he so took it upon him to correct us and to instruct us, that ever since that

day, and it is many years ago, to hear his hated name, or to come upon it in print, hell itself opens that moment in our heart.

Or, again, you will not all have forgotten how Thomas Shepard was sitting one day at one of those sermons of his which cost him so much sweat and so many tears, when a number of the *New England Gazette* was handed into his study. He tried to write on and not to notice the paper. But he could not do it; he could not leave his temptation alone. He knew that there would be in that week's issue that much-talked-of sermon of his friend, Mr. T. H., but he had not as yet attained to love his neighbour as himself, nor his neighbour's sermons as his own. You will not all believe it, but it is a fact that Shepard could compose no more all that day, he was so out of sorts, and he only slept with fits and starts all the next night. At midnight will I rise, said David, when he could not sleep for his sinfulness. And so was it all that night with the founder of Harvard. My loins are filled with a loathsome disease, sobbed the spiritually-minded psalmist. I am feeble and sore broken, and I have roared all night by reason of the disquietness of my heart. I am sick of a strange disease, my neighbour's health, sobbed Sapia, when she also was struck down with a sudden stroke of Hittite envy. Thank God, you say, there can be nobody among us like that! Those were the dark ages! Those were the Old Testament and Papist and Puritan days before the full light arose upon us! But the Puritan key has been turned back, and the prison

has been opened! Yes, and I feel sure if we had lived in the days of the Judges, and if we had had our house in one of the fenced cities, and if we had taken a run out for a week-end to the gardens of Sharon, or to the vineyards of Engedi, and had run home again on the Monday morning, we would have lived in peace all our days, and never have so much as seen a single aboriginal Canaanite. Nor would we have believed the half of the sensational stories that were told about them. But if we had inherited a farm or rented a vineyard far from the centres of population, it might well have been that we would have had personal experiences of both the Amorites and the Hittites; experiences that would have quite eclipsed every disastrous descent of which we had ever heard. At any rate, here is the advice of one who had long been liable to those sudden descents, till he learned to fence in his vineyard, and to build a tower in it, and to man his tower in this way. Addressing himself to some new settlers in that so exposed, so often assaulted land, a master in Israel says to them: 'When at any time you find in your heart sudden surprisals of envy towards any person, whether on account of his riches, his power, his reputation, his learning, or his advancement, if you should immediately at that time betake yourself to your prayers and pray to God to bless and prosper your neighbour in that very thing which has aroused your envy: if you should express and repeat your petitions in the strongest terms, beseeching God to grant him all the happiness from the enjoyment of his prosperity that can possibly be received;

you would soon find such prayer to be the best antidote in the world to expel the venom of that poisonous passion.' Such is the advice of one who himself garnered great harvests of corn and wine in spite of the incessant assaults of the green-eyed Hittites.

And so on; with all the incessant and sudden assaults of Perizzite anger, and Girgashite gluttony, and Hivite uncleanness, and Jebusite sloth. Every true Israelite among us will have discovered, long ere now, what that sin is which so easily besets him. And every true Israelite will be learning how, better and better, to fence his vineyard and to build a tower and to set a watch.

Before we break up, here are one or two things that every true Israelite who is so surrounded by his enemies will do well to keep always in mind. And first—Paul and your sin-assaulted soul are exactly alike, and that is something for you to think about, is it not? Like you, when Paul would do good evil would suddenly assail him. That is to say, when he would have all his thoughts, and all his feelings, and all his imaginations, and all his emotions all according to the holy law of God, behold, in a moment, he would be overwhelmed with a rush of inward evils that would make him the most miserable man then living on the face of the earth. He would be writing the Epistle to the Romans after his day's work, when a letter or a newspaper of the day would be delivered to him that would plunge him into such an agony that all the other lodgers would hear his outcries through the wall all that night. 'O wretched man that I

am!' they heard him cry, till they thought that he must have committed murder sometime and somewhere before he came to Corinth. And as they held their breath and listened they would make out such incoherent cries as these: 'Sold under sin! That which I hate, I do! In me dwelleth no good thing! Sin alone dwelleth in me!' And then, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ!' After which the house would be quiet for the rest of the night. And they would return to their interrupted sleep saying to one another: He is the best of fellow-workmen, and the kindest of fellow-lodgers, but there is a strain of madness in him sometimes! And they were not far wrong. Only it was not ordinary moonstruck madness. It was that heavenly madness that the Holy Ghost lays only on the hearts of the very holiest of men.

And remember to keep this also always in mind for your comfort. That is to say, such of you as are afflicted as the apostle was so often afflicted. 'A sin,' says Bass Rock Brea, 'under which a man truly mourns, and which he loathes like hell, that sin will not in the end destroy that man's soul. It is sin entertained and indulged and hidden in the heart, that alone destroys a man's soul.' Remember that when you are again suddenly assaulted with your indwelling sin. And keep singing this and the like of this, continually:—

'Saints by the power of God are kept
Till the salvation come:
We walk by faith as strangers here;
But Christ shall call us home.

A hope so great, and so divine,
May trials well endure;
And purge the soul from sense and sin,
As Christ Himself is pure.'

XIV

'LIKEWISE, BEING IN THE SOUTH, THE LORD TRYSTED ME WITH A POWERFUL NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY'

NOW you all know quite well what the young laird of Brea means by a tryst. Every Scottish man and every Scottish woman know in their innermost hearts what a tryst is. And if there are any English men here or English women who do not know that sweet word of ours, let them go to the Free Library and look up Dr. Jamieson, our learned Scottish lexicographer, and he will supply them with page after page of explanations and illustrations of what we mean in our so expressive mother-tongue by a tryst. It is our young lovers who make most use of that sweetest of all their words; and they mean by it their trust; their mutual promise and appointment to meet one another some time soon and somewhere alone. And thus it is that when young Fraser says that the Lord trysted him in the South with a powerful New Testament ministry, his meaning is that what he had never met with to his satisfaction in the North, that he was happy enough

to meet with as soon as he came South. The whole passage is in his own peculiarly penetrating style; it is this: 'Likewise being in the South, the Lord trysted me with a powerful New Testament ministry, which did keep in my dying life. Many a time was my swooning soul revived, and I brought back from the gates of death. Moreover, that ministry sanctified me more and more, both in heart and in life. And it made me to relish the most heavenly things in my innermost soul.' Blessedest, surely, of all young Fraser's trysts! And blessedest, surely, of all his trysting-places!

Now, Fraser does not give us the name of that so powerful minister, nor the name of the town in which he carried on his so powerful ministry. But whatever his name was and whatever his town was, you may depend upon it that that so powerful minister to Fraser felt himself to be the weakest man and the worst preacher and pastor in the whole of Scotland. For it has always been so, that it is the weakest of men in themselves who make the most powerful preachers of Jesus Christ. Pascal, I suppose, was the most powerful preacher of Jesus Christ in all the Christendom of his day, north or south. And yet, again and again, he makes the weak confession that the very buzzing of a fly, or the creaking of a door, or a footstep on the stair, or the hoof of a horse on the street, would sometimes quite upset him for all that day: such was his 'disproportion,' as he called it, and such was his powerlessness over himself. Paul also was the weakest of all the apostles till his Master came to

him and strengthened him to be the strongest of them all. And Paul's Master warns us all that without Him we are all as weak as Paul and Pascal; and, indeed that without Him we can do absolutely nothing as it ought to be done. The short is, that the preacher who was made so powerful to Fraser would be the weakest of the weak to himself. You may always and everywhere depend upon that pulpit paradox, both north and south.

But that was not Fraser's first experience of preachers and of their powerful sermons in the South. 'I remember,' he writes, 'when I came to Edinburgh first, one Sabbath Day, I went to hear an able and a much cried-up preacher. Only, that day, there was such a crowd around the church door that I could not get in. But I stumbled into an Independent church with no great hope to get any good. In that half-empty church the minister took this for his text, "A bruised reed shall He not break." And, what shall I say? The Lord assisted that preacher with such power that day, and he spoke so seasonably to my soul, that I was again revived, and was at once set forward in the right way, till I resolved to hold on until I truly found the Lord.' Now that passage in *The Memoirs of James Fraser of Brea* was surely written for the solace of those preachers in Edinburgh who have no one to cry them up, and who only get the overflow of their neighbour's overcrowded congregations.

No doubt that forsaken preacher had been staying up his downcast heart all the past week with that

divine promise which he took that Sabbath morning for his text. And 'as God would have it,' he had the young laird of Brea among his hearers that morning. And that bruised reed in the pulpit so spoke to that bruised reed in the pew that he cries up that preacher to this day. All the same, I feel quite sure that that despised and deserted preacher would far rather have had his church crowded with people to cry him up from week to week, than he would have had that cry put off till Fraser wrote his *Memoirs*, and till we read his *Memoirs* in Edinburgh to-night. We who are cried-up preachers in Edinburgh are far more anxious to have a great throng of people every Sabbath around our doors than we are to have a hearer or two who shall go home from our sermon revived and set forward in the right way. 'Sir, your sermons are doing my soul great good!' said Mrs. Bain, first of Logiepert Manse, and afterwards of our School Board, as she met me with her somewhat military manner one day in Princes Street, more than twenty years ago. In looking back to that salutation I hope I took her good words in something of a proper spirit. But in looking within I feel sure that I would far rather that she had cried me up as by far the ablest and by far the most eloquent preacher in the whole city. Had she said that, and enough of that kind, I would have gone home with the sun on my face, and I would have beamed my happiness on all about me. Poor easily puffed-up sinners that all your preachers are! And as easily cast down again! Brethren, pray for us! wrote Paul to the

Thessalonians. Lest, having strengthened others, we ourselves should be castaways! But with all that Fraser frankly confesses that when he was a student at the University of Edinburgh he was often guilty—they are his own words: 'I was often guilty of neglecting powerful sermons that were preached in that city by some of the ablest men in the whole kingdom.' Now, both the Covenanters in Scotland in Fraser's day and the Puritans in England had the most powerful preaching that the Church of Christ has ever enjoyed since it was a Church. England, especially, has never had preaching like that again. And England has largely to thank one of her greatest preachers for that sad pulpit declension. For Richard Hooker was so carried away by the disastrous spirit of controversy that he led the way in England in his unwise and to this day disastrous depreciation of preaching till Coleridge answered him in his splendid Notes on English Divines. And multitudes in England, and some here and there in Scotland, who have never opened a page of Hooker, have got of themselves into his mischievous way of setting publicly recited prayer over against gospel preaching. Till it has come about, especially in the pulpits of the Church of England, that where so much protestation is made about public prayer able gospel preaching has become all but wholly neglected to the widespread impoverishment of the English people. You will sometimes hear superior persons advertising themselves that they go to Church for the beautiful liturgy and then leave the Church as soon as the

liturgy is over. This indecent conduct is conclusively treated by Dr. Stalker in his admirable address delivered in St. Giles on the occasion of the Calvin celebration. I will give you the able passage to think about. 'The prominence,' says the Professor, 'given among us to preaching, is a peculiarity of our Calvinistic worship. It is frequently indeed demanded, and with great confidence, by those who are unfavourable to Calvinistic views on this subject: it is demanded whether it is not better to go to church to pray than to go to hear sermons. But it is not better, if our preaching is all that Calvin insisted it should be. For in prayer man speaks to God, whereas in preaching God speaks to man. And where this prophetic and apostolic strain is present, preaching ought not to yield even to prayer. And where this prophetic and apostolic strain is absent, the less preaching the better.' To which passage let this out of John Foster be added: 'It is mainly by the institution of preaching that the Christian religion is kept a conspicuous thing: a public acknowledged reality. If we are told that we ought rather to say that it is public prayer that has this effect, we have to answer, that public prayer, when separated from preaching, has a very small effect in favour of religion. It is quite certain that where the conductors of public worship have not knowledge enough, and religion enough, to enable them to preach, public worship will soon become little more than a ceremonial routine.' And Mr. Gladstone, with all his Anglicanism—and it was not small—was such a church-goer, and such a hearer of sermons, that

he was wont to call himself a 'thricer'—coining a new word for his church attendance, as against the twicers and the oncers as he called them. Speaking of Mr. Gladstone's Oxford days, Lord Morley says: 'On some Sundays he hears two discourses in the forenoon and the afternoon, and a third in the evening; for though he became the most copious of all speakers, Mr. Gladstone was ever the most generous of listeners.' But to come back to James Fraser the sum is: if you are trysted, and that by God, to have a powerful ministry in your neighbourhood, do not neglect it. And do not accustom your young children nor your student-sons to neglect it. For you know of Whom it is recorded that 'He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day.'

Out of scores of references to the pulpit of his day take this also out of Fraser: 'While I was helpless and hopeless and not knowing what to do, to aggravate all my other miseries, I was compelled to sit under a dead preacher. Ah! said I, and must I have this with all my other evils, an absolutely graceless and lifeless minister!' Now being set upon his salvation above everything else, what did Fraser do in these circumstances? For one thing, he had living and life-giving books at home, just as the people of Kilmany had living and life-giving books at home when young Chalmers was as yet a dead and a graceless parish minister. 'What do you do then?' I asked the other day at a poor old saint who is in Fraser's circumstances as regards

a minister. 'Oh,' she said, 'I have a volume of Spurgeon's sermons that a good friend gave me, and when I have finished the volume I just begin it again.' Spurgeon was a truly living and a truly powerful preacher, and multitudes who had a lifeless and powerless preacher set over them, found life and power as often as they opened his life-giving and powerful sermons. And it is a great question for all us ministers what it was that made that English minister so living and so powerful himself, and so life-giving and so powerful to so many? You will remember what the play-actor said to the preacher who asked him why the theatre was so full while the church was so empty. 'Simply,' said the player, 'because we act fiction as if it were fact; whereas you preach fact as if it were fiction.' 'Set the four last things—death and judgment and heaven and hell—before your eyes every time you enter the pulpit,' said Newman to his divinity students. And then he added to that his favourite passage from Shakespeare:—

> 'Yea, this man's brow, like to a title leaf,
> Foretells the nature of a tragic volume.
> Thou tremblest, and the whiteness in thy cheek
> Is apter than thy tongue to tell thine errand.'

Only, Paul would have added to the four last things, Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And these five, these six things will make the deadest minister among us as alive as Spurgeon was—yes, as alive as the apostle was himself.

But with all that and after all that, by far the best way to look on all our Sabbaths and on all our sanctuaries and on all our Scriptures and on all our sermons, is to see in them all our Saviour's very own trysts and trysting-places with our souls. For after all the real tryst is between Him and ourselves alone. And, O happy the human heart that has been so trysted, and has been so met at the trysting-place, by the Son of God! And all you whose other trysts have come to nothing and to worse than nothing—all you whose most promising trysts have long ago come to a bitter disappointment and to a broken and a desolate heart!—I beseech you, do not despair! Do not give over your heart-hunger and your heart-hope. Rise up and open your desolate hearts, and this very night, to far sweeter and far surer words than any lover on earth was ever able to whisper at his truest tryst. 'Fear not,' says One to you who is far fairer and far sweeter than the fairest and the sweetest of the sons of men, 'Fear not: for thou shalt not be ashamed: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thy Husband: the Lord of Hosts is His Name: and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel. For the Lord hath called thee, as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit; and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.' And, when, as the ways of all true lovers are, He demands of you, and says: 'Say, poor sinner, lovest thou Me?' be sure you give Him the sweet joy of hearing you say in answer:

'Lord! it is my chief complaint
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love Thee and adore;
O for grace to love Thee more!'

And as the truer their own love is, the harder it is to satisfy our lovers that they are absolutely and alone loved in return, go on to say to Him:

'Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men!
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.'

And if all that does not yet satisfy the most insatiable of Lovers, go on to accumulate and to emphasise your assurances, and say to Him:

'Jesus! my Shepherd, Husband, Friend!
My Prophet, Priest, and King!
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End!
Accept the praise I bring!

Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought,
But, when I see Thee as Thou art,
I 'll love Thee as I ought.

Till then, I would Thy love proclaim
With every fleeting breath,
And may the music of Thy Name
Refresh my soul in death.

XV

'YES, I SAID IN RETURN, COME AND LET US REASON TOGETHER'

BUT, then, what is reason? And what is it for God to reason with us? And, then, what is it for us to reason back again with God? Well, our human reason is the mental image, and the moral image, and the spiritual image of our Maker, inscribed and instamped upon the very soul of man. When God said, 'Let us make man in our image,' He as good as said, 'Let us make an intelligent creature, with whom we can reason, and who can, in return, reason with us.' And with that God breathed His own Divine life into the soul of man: in knowledge, and in righteousness, and in true holiness. Till, as the result of that, God could descend, and could walk with, and could converse with, and could reason with Adam and Eve, as a man converses and reasons with his friends.

Well, then, come this evening and hear James Fraser reasoning with God in our own language as a man reasons with his friend.

1. And first, all through his religious life Fraser is continually reasoning with God about some

heavy cross in his life. 'What profit is there to Thee in my blood?' he cries. 'This cross,' he cries, 'is the one burden of my whole life. And it is making me an old man before my time,' he cries, 'And it fills my whole soul with such shame and pain sometimes, that I long for death in order to be done with it,' he cries. His daily cross must surely have been some terrible burden that he had to bear at home; for I find him reasoning with Jesus Christ in this remarkable and arresting way: 'Thou canst not have forgotten Thine own daily cross in Capernaum when all Thy brethren and sisters and Thy very mother herself did not believe in Thee, but were ashamed of Thee, and of Thy doctrine and Thy life. Till Thou hadst to seek a mother, and a sister, and a brother away from home. Well, then,' he reasoned with his Redeemer, 'remember the daily cross that all that was to Thee in Galilee; and pity me, and deliver me, for all my hope is in Thee.'

But bitter and rebellious as Brea often is about his heavy cross, he is fair enough and frank enough sometimes to let us hear the other side also. For such Scriptures as this out of Job would sometimes come home to him with a great heart-quieting power: 'Canst Thou by searching find out God? And canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?' And this also out of Asaph: 'Thy way, with me, is in the sea: and Thy path in the great waters.' But there was no Scripture that had more weight with Fraser than this out of Paul: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the

knowledge of God! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?' Fraser went to the Epistle to the Romans for his justification every night he lived, and it was but reasonable, he said, that God should be let take His own way in the sanctification of His justified servant, as that sanctification also is written in the Romans. And even more than Paul's great doxology, there is an experimental passage in Peter that made Fraser's cross to 'sprout wings' sometimes; just as Samuel Rutherford's Aberdeen cross sometimes sprouted wings to him. 'Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God,' said the Apostle Peter to Fraser, 'that He may exalt you in due time. For the God of all grace, after you have suffered a while, will make you perfect, will stablish you, will strengthen you, and will settle you.' Peter pressed that Scripture home upon Fraser till he actually came to fear, sometimes, that his cross might be removed from off his life before it had finished its work of sanctification and submission in his heart. And till Fraser so washed his face, and so anointed his head, under his cross, that he deceived even Thomas Ross of Tain, who was not easily deceived in such spiritual matters.

2. And, then, a whole lifetime of unanswered prayer: that was another of James Fraser's continual controversies and expostulations with God. Fraser had years upon years and volumes upon volumes of unanswered prayers lying spread out before the mercy seat. And never so much as one word had ever been sent down in answer to

those importunate prayers of his. 'The eighth ground,' that sometimes made this so inward and so intricate man to doubt the truth of his conversion was the thousands upon thousands of his accumulated and still unanswered prayers. But then, some reasonings such as these would sometimes come home to Fraser with great power and with great comfort. 'Lifelong prayer, if need be, is my business,' he would say to himself; 'whereas, the times, and the ways, of His answers—all that is God's business.' Again, he would reason with himself, and would say: 'At any rate, it is good for me to keep drawing near to God in all such matters. And that even if He were never to answer me one word in all this present life. And on one despairing and sinking occasion I find him reasoning thus: 'When God has given a mouth, and has filled that mouth with hunger, is He not bound to come and fill that mouth with suitable meat?' And again: 'God never denies His people without having a good reason for so doing. And sometimes He shows them His good reasons: as in Psalm lxvi. 18, and in 2 Cor. xii. 8 and 9.' And this went on, till Fraser died on his knees before the mercy-seat, and was translated to that land and that life where all his prayers were answered with compound interest.

3. And, then, again, though he had been 'well left,' as we say, and was to the end the laird of Brea in the Black Isle, at the same time he suffered such ill-usage from some of his relatives, and had such severe losses in the matter of money, that he

had no little reasoning with God what all that hardship and impoverishment might mean in God's mind and purpose towards him. But there are suitable reasonings concerning all that, and there are shining examples of faith and trust in some Scripture saints, examples that are surely written for the learning of both Highland lairds and Highland tenants in their most adverse circumstances, and in their greatest impoverishments. The prophet Habakkuk, for one, would seem to have been a highland husbandman under a great impoverishment in the land of Israel. I thought of Habakkuk the other day when I was passing through one of our northern counties and saw the corn crops of whole farms still lying under rain and snow. I saw whole farms with not a stook standing upright in the fields and not a stack roofed over in the cornyards. But with all that sad spectacle around me I did not dare to charge God foolishly. For this came with great power and comfort to my mind, that there is not a drop of rain, nor a ray of sunshine, nor a breath of wind, without our Father. And all that led me to ask, and with a great importunity, that those farmers might be enabled to walk through their rotting fields singing Habakkuk's great song which was written for all believing farmers under a bad harvest. You all have his splendid song by heart:

> 'What though no flowers the fig-tree clothe,
> Though vines their fruit deny,
> The labour of the olive fail,
> And fields no meat supply?

Though from the fold, with sad surprise,
My flock cut off I see;
Though famine pine in empty stalls,
Where herds were wont to be?

Yet in the Lord will I be glad,
And glory in His love;
In Him I'll joy, who will the God
Of my salvation prove.

God is the Treasure of my soul,
The source of lasting joy;
A joy which want shall not impair,
Nor death itself destroy.'

What a compensation it was to that heart-broken husbandman and flock-master in Israel to be able to hand down that triumphant song to thousands of impoverished saints like himself! And what a compensation to all our highland and lowland farmers to be enabled to sing it at family worship, and in their own hearts, amid all their earthly losses! And what a song for ourselves amid all our crosses and losses and impoverishments of all kinds!

4. Fraser had many more reasonings and remonstrances than these. But I shall end to-night with the sorest and the saddest and the most unanswerable of them all, which was this: 'Why does the God of truth and of holiness let my sanctification remain so slow, and so standstill, and so liable to such backslidings?' From the day of his conversion when a student in Edinburgh down to the day of his death, Fraser's secret journal is full of that darkest and most painful of all his reasonings and

remonstrances. These are some of his words written out of an ink-bottle overflowing with tears and blood: 'I thought every creature to be happy but myself. Meat, drink, and company were all so many snares and crosses to me, because of the sinfulness of my heart.' Till, in the holy agony of his heart, he would actually reason and remonstrate with God in this way: 'I thought that I was promised a new and a clean heart! I believed, and I rested on what I had read. And I had read this out of the prophet, and I was simple enough to take it all as spoken to me—this: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My commandments and do them." But, instead of that,' remonstrated Fraser, 'my heart is fouler to-day than ever it was before, and fouler every new day than it was yesterday. I find such a bad heart in my bosom continually that I cry to God every day under it, and say to Him, "Didst Thou ever even begin to fulfil the prophet's promises to me? Or, did he go beyond his commission and so deceive me?" So I was wont to reason with God, in my misery and in my wretchedness.'

'But,' he proceeds in the intricate history of his heart, 'as I gave myself to searching out the mind of God in the sanctification of His servants; and as I read and inquired, deeper and deeper, into the recorded experiences of those great saints of His

who were placed under a signal sanctification, I came on such testimonies and assurances as these—till I copied them out for my own use and for the use of all who need them—such things as these: "The more true holiness, the more tragic the sense of sin." Again, "The honest desire to be holy is our best holiness in this life." Again, "The little fruit which we have in holiness, it is, God knoweth, corrupt and unsound: we put no confidence at all in it: but our continual prayer must be that God would bear with our infirmities, and would pardon our offences." And he took this also out of Samuel Rutherford, and had it written over again on the tables of his own heart—this: 'Sinfulness rages far more in the godly than it does in the ungodly.' And this out of a son of Luther: 'Our sin becomes bitter exactly in the degree that our sanctification advances.' James Fraser did not live in the days of Thomas Chalmers, else he would have copied this also off the blackboard of the school of Skirling: 'The longer the diameter of light, the larger the circumferenee of darkness.' Nor had he this hymn, which we are so happy to have:

> 'And they who fain would serve Thee best
> Are conscious most of wrong within.'

Fraser had a little book full of these things which he carried about in his vest pocket. After which entries, he sets down these supplements and seals of his own: 'By all that God makes me to reason and to admit that there is an unrenewed part in every man, and a part that still inclines to sin and tends

down to death. And hence, be not too much cast down, if thou find much remaining evil within thee. But put the saddle on the right horse—*i.e.* attribute all thy evil to thyself, and all thy good to God's Holy Spirit.' And he has this, also, which makes me think that among all the good books which so helped Fraser, Dante had found his way north to Brea—this: 'God's dealings with His saints always begin with tragedies, but they always end in comedies. Because the latter end of such men is always holiness and peace.'

But to conclude for to-night. As the spiritual life went on with this so inward and so intricate man he came to understand and to acquiesce and to exonerate and to praise, when in his raw-headed days he had reasoned and reclaimed and remonstrated and rebelled. I will wind up with some of his own ripe and wise words: 'Sanctification,' he says, 'is but sparingly let out to me. But this is still to humble me and to make me to long for heaven and its perfect and everlasting holiness. I comfort myself with this that I have the earnest: and an earnest is always but small in respect of the full stock. But, then, a little arles the bargain as well as much. And thus I get these directions: To be a humble man: to live on the fulness of Christ: to long for heaven, and to be weary of the sinfulness of this earth: to remember that the rich are sent empty away, while the poor are made welcome, and are always blessed: and to do good to other men, because he that watereth others shall not be let die of thirst.'

Now, my brethren, if I were to venture to add one word of my own experience to all that of Fraser it would be this: that all the sin, and shame, and agony of soul, connected with my own sanctification, is all ordained to me, I daily see, in order that I may more and more exalt and magnify Jesus Christ as my alone sanctification, as well as my alone justification. My daily experience of the sinfulness of my own soul leads me every day deeper and deeper into the Person and the Work of Christ, as Paul alone preaches Christ and His work to me. And as all evangelical and spiritually minded men have received Christ, and have more and more rested on Him, and more and more looked to Him for all their holiness of heart, as well as for all their peace of conscience. The whole magnificent economies of creation and redemption, of grace and of glory, are all ordained of the Father for the glory of His Son. And the fulness of the Son's glory will be the fulness of our salvation, and nothing else will. When God had fully revealed His Son in Paul, the apostle went on to add the second of the Galatians and the third of the Philippians to the seventh of the Romans: which same sequence, I feel sure, will be your experience and mine as well as his.

XVI

'IN THEE BOTH THE FATHERLESS AND THE MOTHERLESS FINDETH MERCY'

HOSEA'S house was, out of all sight, the unhappiest house in the whole of unhappy Israel. The unhappiness of Hosea's house was of such an awful kind that it cannot be openly and unreservedly told. So much so that not a few of the best commentators on Hosea hold that the prophet's unhappiness at home was too terrible to be literally true. When Hosea says that in God the fatherless findeth mercy he does not mean that he is literally and actually dead himself; or that Gomer, the mother of his children, is literally and actually dead. No. Gomer was not actually dead, unless it was in trespasses and sins. Nor was Hosea himself actually dead unless it was that he was twice dead in his household life of shipwreck and heartbreak past all parallel and past all belief. The mothers of Italy were wont to overawe their disobedient children by pointing out the author of *The Inferno* as he passed along their streets in his exile. 'Look at that awful

man,' they would say to their children. 'That awful man by his disobedience has made his bed in hell and he is only allowed up for a short walk in our town this morning.' And the mothers in Israel would say much the same thing to their children as Hosea staggered past their doors on his way to his pulpit on a Sabbath morning. No; there can be no doubt of it. Our text to-night was often Hosea's text in his so remorseful but so believing preaching, and it was his unceasing plea in his intercessory prayers as he bore up before God his own fatherless and motherless children. It was with poor little ill-fated Jezreel and it was with poor little ill-fated Lo-Ammi and Lo-Ruhamah in his mind continually that Hosea prophesied concerning them and through them concerning the whole house of Israel, and said: 'Take away all our iniquity, and receive both us and our children graciously, for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy.' At the same time, even when Hosea was in his uttermost misery he commanded himself and restrained himself and only said that his three children were fatherless. Amid all his unspeakable misery Hosea was too much of a Hebrew gentleman to breathe a single syllable to the blame of any one but himself. By the time of the text at any rate he did not even suggest in the remotest way that his wife was not the most perfect wife and mother in all Israel. Or that her three children were not the most parent-honouring children in all the land. By this time Hosea's heart was too much broken about himself to blame anybody but himself. To himself Hosea was the worst father in all the

house of Israel. But, all the more, because of that this was his one prayer day and night before God: 'In Thee my fatherless children findeth mercy.'

Now you will all understand and accept that Hosea's book was not written either to expose Gomer or to advertise to all time what a bad father Hosea felt himself to be. Our Heavenly Father has had all this written in order that we who possess this terrible book may all examine ourselves in the light of it: both fathers and mothers and children, lest we come into the same condemnation and reap the same wages out of our own household neglects and transgressions as Hosea and Gomer reaped out of theirs.

Now with Hosea's autobiographic book open before us, and Brea's, and with the book of the family life of our own day also open before us—what is the reason? what are some of the reasons? why so many of our children are fatherless and motherless like the children of Hosea and Gomer and Fraser of Brea? Well, for one thing, this and the like of this will sometimes be seen to happen. In His sovereignty and in His deep providence with a certain man Almighty God will sometimes send to that man a child to bring up who very soon quite outgrows both his father's scope and his father's power. You will sometimes see a son who is nothing short of an intellectual and a spiritual genius born into the house of the most unintellectual, the most unspiritual, and the most commonplace of men. Into the house of a man, say, with nothing but hard prejudices for principles, and with nothing

but the most dried-up and hide-bound superstitions, instead of a planted and a growing life of personal and family religion. Now in a case like that, unless the most extraordinary grace is given to both that father and that son there will be plenty of occasion in that house for a family tragedy scarcely second to the tragedy of Hosea's house in Israel.

Then again, short of such an extreme case as that, changed times and seasons will sometimes come to both the intellectual and the religious life of a certain household. New truths will be discovered in some of the spheres of human life, and new doctrines will begin to be taught to the sons of that household who are at school and college. New attitudes of mind will be taken up and new modes of thought will command the minds of all our reading and thinking men. And the sons of that house who are living and working among all these new conditions will sometimes demand, and will sometimes ultimately assert, a freedom of mind, and even an absolute independence of action, that will look like the most ungrateful revolt against all the oldest doctrines and all the best beliefs of their heart-broken fathers. It is not one father in a hundred who will humble himself to become frankly hospitable to all his son's new teachers and new books. And out of that hopeless incompatibility of mind and heart and character there is produced many a fatherless son; many an intellectual, and spiritual, and family orphan.

Then, again, there are some husbands and fathers among us who have such a bad conscience concern-

ing their whole family life that they go about guilty and gloomy and joyless at home till all that gradually creates a very bad atmosphere for all concerned. They began with such splendid intentions. They well remember how they said that if God would come to them and would give them that sweet saint of His to be their wife, and would entrust them with dear little children, then there would not be a wife in broad Scotland so honoured and so loved to the end, nor children so watched over and so well brought up in their schools, in their companions, in their books, in their sports, and in their Sabbaths especially, around their father's chair. But that sweet dream was dreamed out long long ago. It was a very sweet and it was a very noble dream as long as it lasted, but it did not last very long. 'Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle, and behold, a man was brought unto me, and it was said to me, Keep this man. And if by any means he is missing, then shall thy life be for his life. And as thy servant was busy here and there, the man was gone.'

That is to say, true Sabbath-keeping especially, and true family worship were gone. There are few heads of houses in Scotland, I suppose, who did not, at one time, intend well toward those two so sweet and so blessed Scottish ordinances. But I have my fears about those ordinances in many of our families at the present day. I have my not groundless fears that there are but few families among us where those family blessings are observed as it was at one

time sworn and fully intended that they would be observed. And then, when they go, so much else goes with them. How much the Day alone will declare. But not to go so far away as that Day, you will sometimes overhear husbands and fathers and masters confessing and consulting in a guilty whisper about those two golden ordinances, and how they were observed in their old father's happy house when they were young. And that, not scandalous truants and transgressors. But you will find some of the best and most successful of men in the most remorseful temper about those very same things. Thomas Halyburton of St. Andrews, that great spiritual genius, blamed himself bitterly on his deathbed, not because he had wholly neglected family worship, but because he had not always acted wisely in it. 'I was too long for my family,' he laments. 'I was too wearisome to them in that exercise,' he said when he looked back on his family worship in the light of his last days on earth. And James Guthrie, of Stirling, came to see that he had quite spoiled his family altar for his family by his bad habit of always offering up his own broken heart upon it. And Thomas Shepard's was a strange and an unusual remorse. But as he looked back and thought of his children it was no less a real remorse that he had been far too spiritual in his family prayers with so many new beginners kneeling all around him. While Thomas Boston was far too sensitive to his immediate surroundings, and he too much showed that. Now, we may recover many things by the special grace of God to

us, and by our own repentance and reformation. But if we once lose hold of a sanctified Sabbath, in the matter of our companions, and our conversation, and our books, and if we once lose hold of, or in any way spoil our family worship, I much question if we will ever recover these priceless blessings again.

I happened the other day to overhear three fathers conversing together in low tones about the conversion of their children. One of the three took the old-fashioned evangelical view according to which he had been early converted himself. The second was more inclined to take the more modern and easy-going view and to express that view in more modern language. While the third, from a bad conscience, was mostly silent. Now what is your view and what is your practice in this matter of the conversion of your children? Are you quite content about your children? On what are you resting with such an easy mind as you think about their future and yours? Fathers and mothers, to be plain and apostolic with you, are your children in Christ? Ay or no? You know surely what that means? Now, if they are not clearly in Christ, why are they not? It cannot be that He is unable to undertake for you and for them. It cannot be that He is unwilling toward your children any more than He is unwilling toward your more happy neighbours next door. You should look to it before it is too late. Your children will soon be away for ever from your influence. You may already have postponed that supreme matter far

too long. Have you pressed Him to do it for you and for your child? Or, when asking Him you may not have taken His view of the matter, but some other view, and more popular, of the present day. Or perhaps you did not show earnestness enough about it. Or perhaps your life at home and before your child did not commend an evangelical conversion to him. Perhaps your walk and conversation quite frustrated your prayers both with God and with your child. It is quite possible that it may be too late by this time, unless by a special stretch of God's saving grace. You should see to it. And you should see to it at once. It is too terrible to think that you should ever live to say over your child that it had been better both for you and for him that he had never been born. But you remember and you must not forget Who said that terrible sentence first. Yes, you should see Him about this great matter, and at once. Perhaps the old-fashioned evangelical view is the only view that He will have at your hands. Consult Him about it, and that at once. Give Him no rest about it, as He says Himself. And take no rest yourself, as your own conscience says, till it is settled. Seek conversion first—it is His advice—for your children, and He has bound Himself to see to it that all else is added to that. You have His own word for that.

Now if there had been time I would have liked to remind you what poor little Timothy's mother and grandmother did in apostolic times when they found out that their little manchild was absolutely father-

less in the matter of Holy Scripture and of family worship. But all godly grandmothers will have that family history by heart. And how Susannah Wesley did when she was left alone with her large family. How she took Jacky alone with her to her room on Monday night, and Charley on Tuesday night, and so on. I had the mother of Jonathan Edwards' children also in my mind, and the mother of Thomas Boston's children—but there is not time. Also, I would have liked to have pled with all young fathers and young mothers to begin early in the matter of a sanctified Sabbath and a family altar and never to give in or give over. Dr. Moody Stuart once said to me that if he had ever had any true success in his ministry it was with young communicants and with young fathers when they came to see him about their first baptism. I wonder how those cases of his have turned out? But I will take time to say this. A paradox is not a proper word for the pulpit; but there is a divine paradox in this matter that must be stated here. And it is this: the better a husband and the better a father that any man is the more blame he takes to himself if anything goes wrong in the family. Hosea said that he was to blame for all that had gone wrong in his family but nobody believed that but himself. And, then, both in beginning family life, and in carrying it on, and in winding it up—who is sufficient for all these things? No man is. No mortal man is. But God is. Almighty God is. And in God both the fathers and the mothers of the fatherless, and all the fatherless themselves,

in God, all three, if they seek it in time, will always find mercy. Who is a God like unto Thee? Who is a God like unto Thee? Let us sing to His praise Hosea's family worship psalm as we have it in our thirtieth paraphrase.

XVII

'AUDIENCE OF PRAYER MADE OUT MORE DISTINCTLY THAN FORMERLY'

NOW let James Fraser, our old and deeply experienced fellow-countryman, come forward to-night and tell us, and with all his wonted plainness of speech, just how he attained to a true and a sure audience of Almighty God. Well, like Brother Lawrence of Lorraine, Fraser of Brea at last came to this—he would never leave the time and the place of prayer till he felt sure that he had been in the King's Presence and had seen His face and had gained the ear and had had a gracious audience of his Sovereign. Fraser was no longer content to enter his closet, and to shut his door, and to fall down on his knees, and to offer up an earnest prayer and then to rise up and go away. He was no longer content to do that. For, nowadays, often after he had done all that and was on his feet again and was half out of his chamber, he would return to it again and would shut his door again and would go to his knees again, and would not rise from off his knees this time till he felt far more

sure of his audienee than he was of his own existence. And then when he comes to enter all that into *The Book of the Intricacies of his Heart*, he puts it in this somewhat learned-looking way. Writing first to Mr. Thomas Ross of Tain, and then through him to all the well-read and much-experienced ministers of the North, he puts his experience in this so characteristic way. 'I was wont,' he writes, 'at one time to rest in my devotional duties as if they were my whole end and my one object. I did not as yet make my devotional duties the divinely ordained means to carry me up beyond themselves. I did not yet make them the appointed means to carry me up to Jesus Christ Himself. I stupidly looked on every prayer of mine as so much *opus operatum*; and thus I did not run my pipe past the cistern and up to the Fountain.'

And then to his less learned readers among the Highland people he went on to put the same thing in this striking and instructive way. 'To get your petition to the king written out,' he said, 'and that in the most approved, and respectful, and submissive style, and then to drop it into the post office—that is not enough for your so urgent case of life or death. You must take trouble. You must arise, and leave home, ay, and take a whole world of trouble; and that at any cost. At any cost you must find your way all the way up to London. And you must manage, somehow, one way or other, to get past all the king's servants and bodyguards so as to push your way into

his very presence chamber. And then you must cast yourself down on your face at the king's feet. And if need be you must lay hold of the supports of the throne so as not to let any one drag you out of the audience-chamber till your sealed pardon is put into your hand.' So James Fraser taught and wrote about prayer till Mr. T. H., his house, and Mr. Thomas Ross of Tain, both took up the *opus operatum* lesson, and laid it ever after to heart. And till all the poor people in the Highlands talked around their peat fires on winter nights about their journeys up to London, and about their experiences on the way, and about the reception they got, and all they came through, till they were back in their own houses again. And till *The Book of the Intricacies of James Fraser's Heart* lay always open beside their Gaelic Bible and their Gaelic Bunyan.

But a very singular thing comes in here. And it is a thing that I confess I had not heard of till I read it in James Fraser and in Thomas Goodwin. 'The king,' says Fraser, 'will sometimes himself see to it that all your expenses in London are paid till he has had time to take up your case. He will sometimes both board you and lodge you, and for weeks together at a time, in his own royal palace. He will speak to the comptroller of his household and will instruct that officer to pay special attention to all your wants and all your comforts till you go home again.' 'Your cause is in dependence,' he goes on. 'Your cause is by no means overlooked or overthrown. And, meantime, you will receive out of the royal exchequer what

will bear up all your expenses till a gracious decision is come to in your case.'

And the other divine named above dwells at still greater length on the same thing and in his own incomparably rich way. 'Even when your matter has not yet passed the king's seal,' he says, 'you will meantime meet with such entertainment at Court that you will be well content just to live on where you are and as you are. To be treated like a prince of the blood, so as not seldom to be summoned in to take your seat at the royal table—how astonished and how delighted they are at home to get your daily letters telling them about all that?' Some light, I think, begins to dawn on my mind as to what those two so intricate and so experienced men mean to teach me by all that. I think they mean to teach me that even when my most pressing and most importunate prayers are not answered as yet; still, just to draw near to God, just to dwell in His house, just to meditate on His ways with His people, and just to continue to call upon His Name: all that will keep my soul in life; ay, and even in abundance, till God's time comes to take up my whole case, and to finish it for ever for me. Yes, you have often felt yourselves, my brethren, have you not? that it was good for you still to wait upon God, all your accumulated and unanswered prayers notwithstanding. That, I think, is what James Fraser and Thomas Goodwin mean when they say that their Sovereign meantime pays all their travelling expenses and all their waiting expenses out of His own pocket till their

cases come up for His final adjudication. What intimate, and what intricate, and what interesting men those old divines were. And what a delight it is to unravel their intricacies of soul, and then to go on to imitate them!

But with all that I am downright afraid, and I shrink back from telling you the kind of case and the kind of confession and supplication that this same man had to make when he was alone with his heavenly King. I am afraid to tell you all that Fraser told his Saviour about himself lest he should lose all his good name with you. For if you had been hiding behind the mercy-seat and wholly out of his sight and had been let hear him when he was lying on his face before the mercy-seat in his tears and in his blood, you would have broken out in your scorn and contempt of him, and would have exclaimed, Away with him! Away with him! Such a man as he is by his own confession is not fit to live! All the same, and all your indignation and scorn notwithstanding, so it was with him. Now shall I give you—and are you able and willing to bear it?—just one or two sentences out of Fraser's secret book, when he was a student at the University in this city? Well, as he read the Epistle to the Romans one Sabbath night in his lodgings he laid it down and made this entry in his intricate book; and that not as a divinity student taking notes about Paul, mind you, but about himself, this: 'The so holy and the so spiritual law of God has so entered my evil heart to-night that my inward sinfulness has

become exceedingly sinful. And till I have had such a sight of myself and of my God that I am terrified both at myself and at Him. For my awakened and guilty conscience seizes me by the throat and says to me that I so smell of hell to-night that how can the God of heaven put me among His people? The brand of the reprobate is upon thee! says my exasperated conscience to my face, and I cannot deny it. But with all that I ventured to my knees, and I think I prayed all that night as I never had prayed before. If I die, I said, I shall die on the steps of the mercy-seat and holding by its horns. And, a while after midnight, I arose and went out to the fields under Arthur's Seat. And as I went about praying, I had this expression: Lord, Lord, said I, if Thou wilt compassionate me for nothing else yet compassionate me for my young years. And as I stumbled home in the darkness I remember that this came to me: Surely the deceiver himself has his hand in all this! For as long as I served him, as long as I knew not the sinfulness of my heart, I had none of this awful agony. But ever since God's holy law has entered my sinful heart, and ever since I have given myself up to Christ to save me, all this awful distress has come upon me. And, as I remember, I had a whole night of reasoning with myself about all that. I continued in this extremity of soul for many days, never attempting to open my mind, no, not even to my much-experienced minister. For, I said to myself, much as he knows about sin, he can never have known a

sinful heart quite like mine. Till next Sabbath night I was led on to read the eighth of the Romans. After which I wrote this in my book: Ever blessed be the Comforter Who inspired that golden chapter! And ever blessed be the penman who put that golden chapter into Holy Writ!'

Now I will put it to you all, students like him and all: What do you think about all that? And what do you say to all that? Was James Fraser mad, think you? Was he beside himself in all that? Was he gone clean out of his mind? No! you know better! Now, come away. Suppose this night was to be the last on which you were to be allowed to neglect God, and to despise His mercy-seat! And, mind you, it is quite possible! Suppose He is at last quite wearied out with the way you spend your Sabbath nights. Suppose before to-morrow you, now sitting there, were to be in that place where you will no more be preached at and persecuted about prayer or about anything else of that kind. I tell you, sirs, you will all remember these Sabbath nights in this house, and will unavailingly wish that you had one of them back again. 'I have five brethren on earth,' said the rich man in hell. Well, here is something for you. Here is the prayer of a family of brothers and sisters, like his and yours, after a Sabbath night like this—I will give you their very words: 'O God!'—they all said, they all joined in saying—'we have all neglected Thee in our house! We have all contemned Thee, and all Thou couldest say to us! We have scorned Thee, seeking us. We have

despised and turned our backs on Thee, loving us. We have stopped our ears against Thee, pleading with us. We have despised all Thy warnings. We have laughed at all Thy threatenings. We have boldly withstood Thee up to this night. But if Thy mercy-seat is not for ever withdrawn, and if indeed Thou art still waiting to be gracious to us: then hear us at last and take away all our insult and neglect of Thee, with all our other iniquities, and, to-night, receive us graciously.' And it was so. For, from that night, that whole house was at peace with God, and with one another, as they had never been before. Mad! Beside himself! Out of his mind! 'When he came to himself,' says our Saviour, telling us the story of a young man's conversion—'when he came to himself, he said, 'I will arise and go to my father!' And when his father saw him he said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again! He was lost, and is found." And they began to be merry.'

But to come back for one moment to where we began. That is to say to take a student's view of an audience of prayer. For students like to take all the processes and all the experiences connected with their salvation in a student-like way. And nothing is more pleasing to God than that they should do that. For He is the God of all truth and all knowledge and all wisdom and all true philosophy as well as of all true theology. And He will bless and will accept all their studies who seek first the Kingdom of God; and, especially, who seek first the righteousness of His Son. All their University studies will then work together to make

them perfect men unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. From whom the whole body of their studies fitly joined and compacted together by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working of every part, maketh increase of the mind unto the edifying of itself in love. In other words, when they themselves are rooted and grounded in Christ then their Greek and their Latin and their French and their German and their Italian and their English Classics will all genuinely refine their minds. Their mathematics also will give a new clearness and a new acuteness to their minds. Their history will as never before both civilise and enlarge their minds. Their philosophy, and of all schools, will deepen and soften and sweeten their minds. And more than all, their astronomy will overwhelm and prostrate their minds, and will overawe and enthral their hearts. And, then, their religion, if it is spiritual enough, and if it is evangelical enough, will do all that to their minds and to their hearts over again, and all that, in a still better than the best way before. In his own strong and deep and calm and wise way Butler says: '. . . Divinity, that being what I chose for the business of my life; it being, I think, of all other studies, the most suitable to a reasonable nature.' Now, as many of you as being of a reasonable nature, have chosen divinity for the business of your life, be sure you never come short but follow out your life choice to its utmost perfection. That is to say, follow it out to a life of audience of prayer; follow it out to a personal life

of the most son-like and the most saint-like audience of prayer. Seek an audience of God every day and many times every day and about every person and every thing that in any way concerns you. For this is to be a true student, this is to be a truly learned man and a truly wise man!

O gentlemen! open your minds to the overpowering magnificence of the very thought! Open your imaginations to the transcending picture of it! You in an audience with Almighty God; you in an audience, and as often as you please, and as intimate and alone as you please, with the King of kings: the Maker and the Ruler of heaven and earth! In an audience with Him, while His holiest angels stand afar off covering their faces and their feet with their wings, till they are summoned in to serve you. O, I beseech you, be men at once of an audience of prayer! And when the time comes be great preachers of that same gracious audience. And may your own audience grow ever more and more distinct, till you see the King's face in glory and dwell for ever in His presence!

XVIII

'I FIND ADVANTAGES FROM MY SINS. AS HOLY MR. FOX SAID, SO WILL I SAY, MY SINS, IN A MANNER, HAVE DONE ME MUCH MORE GOOD THAN MY GRACES'

IN the text Paul is discovering to his readers in Rome the several Divine economies of sin and grace, of law and gospel, that succeeded one another in the Old Testament Church. Whereas, John Fox and James Fraser are disclosing to us their own personal experiences of sin and grace in their own souls. The apostle is working his historical way on towards his own personal experiences also. But like the greatest of our Bible teachers that he is, he begins at the beginning and he pursues his great theme consecutively down to the end. He begins with Adam, and Abraham, and Moses, and he does not stop till he has shown us, incontestably, how they all end in Christ. But just as Paul in his so experimental and so personal seventh chapter, when he comes to it, carries all that down into the depths

of his own soul, so do Fox and Fraser in the soul-searching text that I have taken from them this Sabbath evening. Paul's economical and dispensational text, and Fox and Fraser's personal and experimental text exactly agree: they fit, exactly, into one another. Fox and Fraser are just Paul's great dispensational passage taken personally, and individually, and experimentally. All which will come out clearly as we proceed with them, and with some other saintly men, who were deeply exercised both in sin and in grace, like them.

Well, to begin with, both the English puritan and the Scottish presbyterian testify to us that their great sinfulness was of the very greatest advantage to them in reading and understanding their Bible. John Fox and James Fraser were both first-rate scholars. They could read their Hebrew Bible and their Greek New Testament without the aid of a grammar or a dictionary or a commentary. But they could not read either their Old Testament or their New Testament without the aid of their great sinfulness. Without their great sinfulness their Bible would have been a seven-sealed book to them. Not all parts of their Bible, however. For, like John Bunyan, John Fox and James Fraser could read and enjoy all that is written concerning Samson's gigantic strength, and young David's astonishing skill with his sling. But as for Paul's Epistles they could not away with them. But when, as years went on with them, and as the holy law of God more and more entered and

more laid open their evil hearts, then their sin so abounded that they could never have enough of Paul. In fact by the time he lay in his prison on the Bass Rock Fraser of Brea had Paul's Epistles so worked into his heart that without a grammar or a dictionary he rendered the Romans and the Galatians over again into his own Scottish and covenanting dialect. Paul's appointed part of the Bible, and indeed every part of the Bible, was written for sinful men to read and for sinful men only. But for our sinfulness we men and women of Adam's race would never have needed the Bible. Without our sinfulness not one chapter of the Bible would ever have been written. Other classical books, such as Homer, and Plato, and Shakespeare, might have been written, but not the Holy Bible. And thus it follows that the more sinfulness any reader brings to his Bible, the better he will understand his Bible, and the better he will enjoy his Bible. 'I was driven,' says John Bunyan, 'to a far deeper search into the Scriptures: and I was, in that way, not only enlightened into their meaning: but I was greatly confirmed and comforted. And, besides all that, the guilt of my sin did help me much: both to understand my Bible, and, continually, to close with Christ.'

And, then, as to the advantages that our preaching takes from our sinfulness. As to that, listen to Thomas Halyburton, that great St. Andrews scholar and saint, when he was on his deathbed. To his students, who had come to receive his parting blessing, their old divinity professor said:

'Be diligent in composing your sermons. But above all be diligent in scanning your own evil hearts. And then make use of the awful discoveries you make there to enable you to dive down into the evil hearts and evil consciences of your hearers. I more and more preached in that way when I was in the pulpit,' said the dying man. 'And since I lay down here I have not repented that part of my preaching. By the abounding of my own sinfulness the Lord taught me how to value the Remedy He has provided for my sinfulness in His own blood and righteousness. And by my experience both of the deadly disease and the Divine Remedy, I came to understand both better, and to speak better about both.' 'No,' says Luther also. 'No. I did not learn to preach Christ all at once. No: nor for a long time. It was my deep, and ever deepening, corruption of heart that best prepared me for my pulpit. The devil, indeed, to tell the truth, was my best professor in the chair of apologetical, and exegetical, and experimental, and dogmatical divinity. Before that great schoolmaster took me in hand I was a sucking child. It was my temptations, and my corruptions, and my transgressions that ultimately made me at all a true minister of the New Testament. And, without incessant combat, and pain, and sweat, and tears, and blood, no stripling of a student ever yet became a great preacher.' So says the greatest preacher that ever spoke from the Pauline pulpit, after Paul was translated out of it.

And as it is with the pulpit so is it with the pastorate. Even myself, I could not visit my people with any authority, or with any assurance, or with any power, without my own sinfulness. And outside my own people, it is the very same. I constantly get letters, some signed, and some unsigned, that I could not answer, had I not some share of Fox and Fraser's advantages and preparations for my pastorate. I have one correspondent on my hands at the present moment who dates his letters from his bed in hell. And it has taken all my own experience of that bed, and all Paul's experience of it, and all Fox and Fraser's experience of it, and all Brodie and Bunyan's experience of it, to convince my correspondent that they have all escaped as bad a bed as his. And with all that I am not quite sure that I have even yet heard the last agonised cry of my despairing correspondent. 'For my pastorate also,' says Fraser, 'I find great advantages from my own great sinfulness.'

But not only in reading their Bible, and not only in their preaching and in their pastorate did those so Paul-like men take great advantages from their great sinfulness, but in their prayers and in their praises also. No man ever prayed without ceasing, as Paul expects all his readers to do ; no man, who did not first sin without ceasing. Luther, again, who was Paul over again, was wont to say that since he was always sinning so he was always confessing his sin, and was always washing himself clean in Christ's blood, and was always putting on Christ's righteousness. Many men among our-

selves have prayed without ceasing for this passing thing and that at certain epochs of their lives. But there are other men among us whose great sinfulness makes them pray without ceasing at every epoch of their lives. And more and more and day and night the longer they live. And so is it with their singing of God's praises. Such sinful men praise God not on Sabbath only but Sabbath and Saturday. They praise Him for His great salvation every night they lie down, and every morning they rise up, and in every office and every workshop, and on every street and every square of the city. And they thank God every day for the prayers and the psalms and the spiritual songs He has had prepared in such abundance for the chief of sinners. Just let me hear for a single Sabbath the psalms and hymns that a minister selects and gives out to be sung in church and I will soon see whether or no the holy law of God has again entered and laid open his heart during the past week, or, indeed, ever at all. There was a time when both Paul, and Fox, and Fraser read only the historical and the heroical parts of their Bible, and sang only the historical and processional psalms. But when the law entered their so sinful hearts they could never be torn away from the 32nd Psalm, and the 51st, and the 103rd, and the 130th. Just as you—some of you—cannot be torn away from the same psalms: nor from the Newton, and Cowper, and Wesley, and Bonar, and suchlike evangelical hyms. Only, in the hands of weak, and one-sided, and ill-balanced men, even

the most scriptural and spiritual and experimental prayers and praises are apt to become far too frequent, and far too exclusive, in the pulpit and at the family altar. As was the case with the saintly James Guthrie of Stirling, till his beadle took him and gave him a never-to-be-forgotten lesson about the selfishness and the one-sidedness of his family worship. At the same time, when the holy law of God is plunged deeper and deeper every day into a minister's sinful heart, who can wonder that he is sorely tempted to take up John Newton's prayer and to say and sing continually, in public and in private :

> 'With my burden I begin,
> Lord, remove this load of sin !
> Let Thy blood for sinners spilt,
> Set my conscience free from guilt !
>
> Lord ! I come to Thee for rest,
> Take possession of my breast,
> There Thy blood-bought right maintain,
> And without a rival reign.'

Now will you wait with me for a few moments more till I show to the divinity students present how deep in their best books and how widespread in their best books is the truth of the text? Our best students of divinity are so absorbed with their apologetic and exegetic and doctrinal and historical studies all the week that they have not time, as yet, for the great experimental books; the books they must master also before they can be acceptable and profitable preachers to the true saints in their future congregations. And since great names go such a

great way with all good students, I have collected a short *catena* of such names, wherewith to wind up to them the sermon of this evening. As thus: summing up one of his lectures on Augustine in the Latin Chapel of Oxford, Canon Mozley says: 'Augustine clearly saw the sanctifying effects of the sense of sin upon the Christian character. And that because the sense of sin creates a humility which compensates for the source of it, and for the occasion of it, and founds a character, which is a sort of perfection based upon imperfection.' And John Calvin, the soberest of men, supports Augustine, the most impulsive of men, in saying the same thing. 'All things,' says that great reformer, 'all things which happen to the saints are so overruled by God that what the world regards as only evil, the issue shows to be only good. For,' says Calvin, 'what Augustine says is true, that even the sins of the saints are, through the exceeding grace of God, so far from doing them harm, that, on the contrary, their sins serve to advance their salvation.' And Richard Hooker, a theologian, if possible, still more judicious and still more sober-minded than even John Calvin, says on this same subject, and in support of the same Latin Father: 'I am not afraid to affirm it boldly with St. Augustine, that puffed-up men receive a benefit at the hands of God, when they are permitted, and, that, grievously, to transgress. Ask the very soul of Peter,' says the greatest theologian in the English Church, 'and it shall undoubtedly make you this answer: My eager protestations, made in the glory of my ghostly

strength, I am now ashamed of; but those garden tears, wherewith my sin and my weakness were bewailed, have procured my endless joy; my strength was my ruin, but my fall has been my stay.' And our own Samuel Rutherford is not likely to be left far behind by the best of them when the grace of God is to be magnified. 'Had our sins never been,' he writes, 'we should for ever have wanted the mysterious Emmanuel, the Beloved of the Father, the Chief among ten thousand, Jesus Christ, the God-Man and the Saviour of sinners. For, no sick sinner, no soul-Physician; no captive, no Redeemer. Mary Magdalene with her seven devils; Paul with his hands smoking with the blood of the saints; and all the rest of the Fountain-washed company: think of them all! O what a depth of unsearchable wisdom! Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!' And, the always pungent Thomas Shepard of New England has this testimony on this same subject: 'You shall find that there is not a passage of God's providences toward thee but He will get a name to Himself by means of it. Doth not thy weakness strengthen thee, like Paul? Doth not thy blindness make thee cry for light? And, like David, when thou hast very venom in thy heart against thy brother hast thou not loathed thyself on that account and fled to the City of Refuge? Thy falls into sin have made thee weary of sin, and have made thee to watch against it, and to long to get rid of it. And thus, thy God hath made thy poison thy food; thy death thy life; and thy

damnation thy salvation. And hence,' he adds, 'holy Mr. Fox said that he thanked God more for his sins than for his good works.' And hear Halyburton again: 'The Lord did let me see that there was a great deal more wickedness hid in my heart than I had ever suspected. He hereby instructed me that this is not my rest. And this made me value and dwell on the prospect of Heaven far more than otherwise I would have done. Thus was I made a gainer by my losses: and all to the praise of His glorious grace.' 'In one sense,' says John Newton in his *Cardiphonia*, 'we are excellently well suited to answer God's eternal purpose. For, if we were not vile and worthless beyond all expression, the exceeding riches of His grace would not have been so gloriously displayed in us. God's glory shines far more in redeeming one sinner like you and me than in preserving and upholding a thousand sinless angels like Gabriel and Michael themselves.' And, give a student's ear to Jonathan Edwards, who has been truly called one of the greatest of the sons of men: 'Our sin and our misery,' says that matchless master in our puritan Israel, 'by this contrivance of redemption are made the occasion of our greater blessedness. By our sin we had deserved everlasting misery, but by the divine wisdom and grace our sin and our misery are made the occasion of our being everlastingly blessed. The saved sinner shall be far more holy and far more blessed than he would have been if he had never sinned at all. For does not the apostle say that where sin abounded, grace did much more

abound; that, as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord?'

And to conclude the inexhaustible *catena* with the greatest English preacher of the past generation whose name will be read by all students in his style: 'The deep confession of sin enters into the highest holiness of all true saints. The pattern saints of God cherish in their hearts the everlasting memory that they are but redeemed sinners, and they carry into heaven that rapturous avowal on their lips. That rapturous avowal, which is the triumphal song sounding from the heavenly harps of the blessed before the throne, who sing for ever to their Divine Redeemer, as they serve Him day and night in His Temple, and say, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us kings and priests to God, to whom be our praise everlasting!"'

'Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.'

XIX

'I THOUGHT THAT FAITH WAS SOME GREAT FULGOR AND GLORY IN THE SOUL'

'WHEN I was still but an apprentice at the thing myself,' says Fraser, 'I thought that faith was always a great effulgence of heavenly light shining in the soul. I thought that once I had true faith my faith would then be as the shining light, that shineth more and more to the perfect day. Before I was one of them myself, I foolishly thought that the truly regenerate must always live a life of perpetual peace and of unalloyed sweetness. I felt sure that they must perform all their duties, and carry all their crosses, with an absolutely victorious strength. And I looked forward, myself, to have true faith enough, some day, to remove all the mountains that stood in my way. And then, I thought, I would go on from strength to strength, till I appeared perfect before God in Zion. In my salad innocence, I said, give me but true faith and all the promises that are made to true faith, and, then, let all men take

what they like: even of what belongs of right to me. Faith, I said, and the promises of God, are patrimony enough for me. Let my litigious relatives go on plundering me: and let the courts in Edinburgh go on giving my enemies the law against me: even so: I will laugh at the shaking of all their spears.

'Also, I remember how I learned by heart Habakkuk's fine doxology, lately set to music in Scotland. And I sang it to the Sheriff's officer when he came to my door one day with my summons to Edinburgh in his hand, till I believe the good man thought that I was not in my sober senses. I see it as if it had been but yesterday. I took him into the pantry, and I healthed him there, and I made him health me, while I sang all the time the prophet's song:

> "God is the Treasure of my soul,
> The source of lasting joy:
> A joy which want shall not impair,
> Nor death itself destroy."

And at our family worship that night I expounded Habakkuk, and all the servants and retainers joined me in his doxology. And, altogether, I was so carried that night that I broke out aloud in the hearing of the whole house and said—Take away my whole estate of Brea, and all my money that is in the Inverness bank, and leave me but that paraphrase, and you are welcome to all the rest. But, alas! how was I mistaken about myself! And how soon was I made to see my mistake! The soft wax that held my young wings together was soon melted,

and I came down to the earth with a crash that broke every bone in my body. And my collapse came about in this way. One worldly thing after another went completely against me. Our crops could not be gathered in that winter. Like Habakkuk's corn they all rotted in the rain and snow. And on the back of that, the long-pending case at last went against me in Edinburgh. And on the back of all that, old family claims were raised by arbitration against me, and they all conspired to make me all but penniless. And almost worse to bear than all that, were the harsh judgments of my neighbours, and even of my most Christian-minded friends. Till, Icarus-like, I fell from my high flight of faith, and lay broken in a thousand pieces. Yes: shame to tell, all my faith in God completely failed me in my extremity. All the promises of God, that had formerly been my song, came back now to my memory only to mock me. But, to the praise of God, and to the comfort of all His tempest-tossed people, let them be told. When all my faith was but a broken reed, and when I was at my very darkest, I took out Thomas Shepard to the fields with me one day, and was trysted with the passages "A soul," he said, "may most truly come to Christ, and yet may find no change at first. Nay, not only so, but a soul may, on first coming to Christ, have a great fulgor and glory: and yet may so lose all that afterwards as to be darker and sadder than ever." At that I closed the book, and looked up to heaven, and said, *Is that so? Is that indeed so?* Because, if that is

so, then I will try to have hope and will not wholly despair. If that is so, then I may have had a true faith all the time: and may have it still; even if it is at this moment like so much smoking flax.' And so on: till he reasoned, and prayed, and believed himself back into the daylight.

With all his insight into divine things, and his insight was not small, Fraser here records the great mistake that he made, and it was a costly mistake to him. He made a great mistake indeed, when he insisted with himself that a true faith must always manifest itself as a great fulgor and glory in the soul. Had he attended to what he read, Isaiah would have told him that instead of a great fulgor in the soul the best faith is often nothing better than a secret spark of fire at the heart of a bundle of scarcely smoking flax. But, no: Fraser in the pride of his heart would not have that. He insisted that unless there was a far-shining blaze of light and heat and power he refused to believe that he had ever had any true faith at all. Fraser had yet to learn that a true, and a genuine, and an evangelical faith is the most modest, the most lowly-minded, and the most low-lying of all the Christian graces. He had yet to learn that the innermost essence and *differentia* of a true faith, as he afterwards called it, is absolute self-despair: and, then, absolute trust in Another. When true faith ventures on a song at all, her song is always this:

'Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;

Helpless, look to Thee for grace,
Foul, I to the Fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour: or I die.'

All her sister graces have some self-confidence; but not faith. They all feel as if they could do something that would not be wholly unacceptable before God. But not faith. She never lifts her horn so high as that. All her days on earth, the most absolute self-despair always dwells at the heart of faith: the most absolute self-distrust, self-despair, and self-forsaking. Till, 'Trust in the Lord, for ever trust,' is another of her favourite songs in the house of her pilgrimage. 'Why?' asks one of Fraser's spiritual teachers: 'Why did God choose *faith* of all the graces whereby to save a man? Because, the poorest man in the whole world; the man with the weakest understanding, can still *believe* and *trust*. When a poor man hears that God is able and willing to save sinners, that poor man is able to trust God as strongly, and as firmly, as the wisest and the most understanding man in all the world. Nay, your weak man is *more apt* to believe, than your strong man, your weak man is altogether far more suited for faith.' And when Fraser had fully learned his lesson, I find him writing thus himself: 'Well said I, Lord, since it is so that I must *believe* against sense and reason, then, come away, for I do lippen my soul to Thee. I do trust Thou wilt save me from all my sins. Yes, I said with Job, I will die trusting in His grace and goodness. And, now, since I have sealed this great bargain with Thee, O send strength, not for any merit in

me, but because I am now Thy servant and Thou art my Master.'

There was one occasion when young Fraser had fulgor enough to satisfy all his demands in that direction. He had been off and on with God for years about his being a minister. In the providence of God he was a young laird; and did not need to make up his mind as to how he was to make a living. But, from his childhood, God had put it into Fraser's heart that he was predestined to be a Gospel minister in Scotland. At the same time, the young laird had balanced, and had calculated, and had hesitated in obeying his early vow, and in consenting to the divine call. But all he had been coming through of late had brought back the blessedness of the ministry more and more to his mind; till at last about his twenty-fifth year, he finally determined to follow his conscience and his heart, and the drawing of God's Spirit, and at once to give himself up to the work of preparation for the Christian ministry. And no sooner had he decided to do that, than a great 'ecstasy of joy,' a great fulgor of glory indeed, took possession of his heart. And that joy of a great decision never again wholly left his heart. And in that chapter of his remarkable life, Fraser reads a lesson to many of our devout young men who are hesitating and halting between two opinions.

'There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune:
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows, and in miseries.'

Didn't I tell you a moment ago a lesson that one of Fraser's spiritual teachers taught him to his spiritual understanding in the nature of the operations of true faith? Well here is another lesson from the same master in Israel. 'Of all our duties to God under nature and under grace our faith is the easiest.' Explain that to me, exclaimed Fraser; make that plain and true to me, and I will give you the half of all I possess. Now, what will you give me if I copy out that true lesson for you to-night; give me your full attention, and I will ask for nothing more. Well, this was the lesson set to Fraser by Paul's best exegete, as Fraser was wont to call him. 'Of all works else, if a man once find it out, faith is by far the easiest. It is by far the shortest cut. Go to your duties, I do not say but you should use them as means; but to find life in them, you cannot. Go to your graces, and you will have a great amount of pudder in them without any true comfort. But now, go past all that, and straight up to Jesus Christ, and that is faith, and you then have Him and all you need in Him.' But Dr. Smellie's Guthrie comes to my mind at this moment: and on looking him up I find he is even better on the easiness of faith than the author I have given you. Taking a little gilded copy of *The Great Interest* out of his pocket, Dr. Owen said: 'That author I take to be one of the greatest divines that ever wrote. His book is my *vade-mecum*. I have written several folios, but there is more sound divinity in this little book than in them all.' Well this is what John Owen's spiritual master says to Fraser about the

easiness of faith. I give you his very words, not altering one syllable of them: 'Now, I say, this acting of the heart on Christ Jesus is not so difficult a thing as is conceived. Shall that be judged a mysterious and difficult thing which doth consist much in *desire*? If men but have an appetite they have faith: for they are blessed that hunger after righteousness. If you *will* you are welcome. Is it a matter of such intricacy and insuperable difficulty *to look* to the exalted Saviour? Look unto Me, and be ye saved. And to *receive* a thing that is offered, held out, and declared to be mine, if I will take it? Such is faith: if it is not even less.' So far evangelical Guthrie. In all which he but repeats a few invitations of which the word of God is full. Try to remember what he says about desire, and about will, and about looking, and about receiving: and do it all. And begin to-night. Begin to believe to-night, and then live all the rest of your short and insecure life a believer. And you can have no idea how easy you will find it, and how sweet, and how full of blessings of every kind. And the oftener you perform the act of faith the more will you strengthen and build up the life of faith. For acts produce habits, and habits form character. Believe, then, on the spot, and where you now sit. Sing the last hymn believing. Go home for the first time a believer, taking all the enriching blessings of a believer home with you. Lie down to sleep believing. Rejoice, when you awake, that you were here to-night, and say, When I awake I am still with thee! Open your Bible in your bedroom, and at family worship believing. Open your

newspaper believing: 'I read my newsletter,' said Jonathan Edwards, 'in order to see how the kingdom of grace is being advanced, myself and others brought into it, and how the kingdom of glory is being hastened.' So read your newsletter every day: yes, every day. And then go out to make your living, a believing man. Buy believing and sell believing. Build believing, and plant believing, and marry believing, and give in marriage believing. And, then, when all that comes to an end die believing. And we will write this evangelical writing on your tombstone, and will go out sometimes to read it: 'the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness: and do immediately pass into glory,' according to His faithful saying; 'To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.' 'Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.'

XX

'I SET UP ANOTHER SAIL'

READING the other evening in the experimental diary of our Covenanter saint, I came on this suggestive expression: 'Now,' he said, 'at this point I set up another sail.' And reading on I came on this also: 'I forthwith set up some more sails,' he said. He had built his boat, and he had taken his cargo on board, and he had set up one or more sails, and he had taken his seat at the helm, but he soon discovered that he was not making much way; if, indeed, he was making any way at all. There was a good west wind blowing all the time. But such were the cross-currents, and such was the strength of the incoming tide, that he sometimes stood still, and sometimes was simply tossed about backwards and forwards among the chopping seas. Wearied out and at his wits-end he at last bethought himself of some good sail-cloth that lay neglected and forgotten under his hatches. And bringing it up he had scarcely got the extra canvas hoisted on the mast when away went his little ship like a sea-bird before the breeze. But

all that is surely a parable of that Covenanter's spiritual life? you will say. And you are right. It is indeed a parable, and an eloquent parable too, of the spiritual life in the soul of that man. And as I follow out that same spiritual log-book, I come on not a few entries concerning the building of that boat: concerning the cargo that was on board: concerning the sea, and the shoals, and the rocks: and then concerning the port toward which he is steering. But I am to confine my attention this evening to some of the sails that this seaman set up from time to time in his recorded voyage through his spiritual seas.

You will have difficulty in believing it about a canonised Covenanter: but there it stands, in black and white, over his own signature. Covenanter and all; converted student at college and all; I am afraid to repeat it; but let the truth be told—he scarce ever opened his Bible, unless it was at family worship at home, or in church to look for the text. When I told you that he was a Covenanter you would have said that whatever sail he had set up, or had taken down, at any rate his Bible would never be neglected or forgotten. Your Bible and mine are so nailed to our masthead that we can scarcely believe that about any man who bears his honoured name. We never take a journey at home or abroad, for health, or for business, or for pleasure, without having our Bible in our handbag. When nobody is looking we steal a glance at our Bible in the train. We never see the day anywhere, that we can come safely and successfully through it with-

out leaning anew on our Bible. We never, nowadays, see the night in which we can lie down and sleep in peace till our Bible has spoken pardon and peace to our sinful and sad hearts. All the same, you must not too much blame, or too much despise, this misguided man; for, better late than never. Just listen to him now, and henceforth. 'I set up another sail,' he says. 'I began to hold a secret tryst with God in His Word,' he says. Not only so; but he goes on to tell us just what Scriptures they were that made his heavenward ship take such a new start. 'Those Scriptures did me immediate and great good,' he says. 'They suited my state so well. They helped me forward so much.' Now, if by any chance there is any man here who is attempting the sea of life without this mainsail up let that man believe that he has been brought into this house this evening to learn this lesson from this now Bible-reading Covenanter. For just listen to him as he goes on. 'How smoothly my little ship went through the sea under its new sail!' he says. 'How the happy waves danced and sang under her bows!' he says. 'How the clouds scattered, and how the sun came out,' he says. 'And how the very hillsides smiled down upon me as I swept past their feet!' he says. 'From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures,' says Paul, 'which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.'

What would our sea-going men not give for a sail that was never once set up but it was that

moment filled with a favourable breeze? A sail that seemed to create the very wind for strength and for direction that its owner needed? A sail that at once discovered and commanded its own wind where no wind was before that sail was set up. No sail has ever been set up on any earthly sea of which such a miraculous thing could be said as that. No, of course not! The thing is impossible and inconceivable. Yes, with men; but not with God. For there are actually both sails and winds like that on the heavenward seas: sails and winds that it hath not entered the heart of any earthly ship-builder or sailmaker to conceive. Just listen to our Covenanter-seaman on this wonderful matter. So wonderful is it that I give you his own words about it. 'Here I was counselled to set up one other sail. For before that I had gone apart to pray only morning and evening; but I was counselled by one to set some time apart every midday, and, doing that, I immediately found the effect to be wonderful.' And again: 'Let never any man neglect the sail of prayer, though the call to it seems to him to be so unreasonable and untimeous. For, against hope, and sense, and reason, when I was put upon prayer, though it was but the cry of oppressed nature, it was never in vain.' And then, lest it should seem to be so unreasonable and so altogether impracticable to set up our sail of prayer in that way, and to that amount, he fills his page with Bible men from Abraham down to Paul, our Lord and all, who sailed all their seas under this divine sail; the wind that bloweth where it listeth always

coming out of its secret cave whenever and wherever and by whomsoever it saw the sail of prayer set up.

Surely, then, there must be something in it: against nature, and against reason, as at first sight it seems! Yes! there *is* something in it! Yes: everything is in it! For God himself is in it. And the Everliving Intercessor is in it. And the Holy Ghost, the whole life and breath of the Godhead, is in it. What would you say, then, to try it? It could do you no harm, surely, to try it on the waterlogged ship of your stagnant life. You who are making no headway at all: you whose ship now strikes upon the rocks and now runs aground among the shoals, what would you say just to try that wonder-working sail of which such testimonies are given and such praise is offered by so many successful seamen? 'I was counselled by one who knew,' says our author, 'and I obeyed the counsel, and I immediately found the effect to be wonderful.'

In still going on to tell all that fear God what the God of his salvation had done for his soul, and what God had set him on doing for his own soul, our author is most emphatic concerning his Sabbaths and other more special seasons for the deepening and the enriching of his spiritual life. He is most urgent on us about the duty and the necessity of retiring from our ordinary life, now and then, for a season of reading and meditation and prayer, if our spiritual life is to grow in depth and strength. You need not be afraid or suspicious. He was a stiff Covenanter and was as far from Popery and

ritualism as you are. But since he had the happiest experiences himself of the great good of taking seasons now and then to be alone with himself and with God he urges his readers to try his way of it. 'For my own part,' he says, 'I cannot express how needful, nay, how necessary and how profitable those separate and silent days have been to me.' 'Every rightly constituted man,' says German Keim, 'has his time of retreat where he may be his true self, and where, by dint of rest and recollection, he may maintain his true life, and from which he can compel the whole world to submit itself to his soul's interest.'

On one occasion the parish minister of Culross was out in his boat fishing along with his *bedellus*, as he always nicknamed his handy man. And the fish having changed their bed that season, the old expert suggested to his master that they should set up another sail and shift out to a bank where he felt sure a good boatload of cod awaited them. Agreed, said his master. And off they sped under the added canvas. And before an hour was over their boat was full of the best fish in all the Firth of Forth. Till you will not wonder that all the way home that Monday afternoon the minister's heart was full of the wisdom of setting up another sail. And till that extra sail that day was spiritualised by the spiritual minister, and by his equally spiritual beadle, so that neither of them ever forgot the lesson of that afternoon. Indeed the thing was so much in the minister's mind all that week that he took Mal. iii. 16, 17, for his text

next Sabbath morning, when he frankly told his people all about the sails of Scripture and of prayer he had been setting up of late in his own spiritual life, nailing down the doctrine with the little story of the fishing of last Monday, and with the rich conversation he and his beadle had enjoyed all the way home. And till the congregation ever after connected 'another sail' with their own secret reading of Scripture, secret prayer, and confidential conversation. And till any day you would have seen three or four poor old women of Culross sitting at a door in the sun and talking about the things of God, and always returning to the 'extra sail' of the minister and the beadle, their so successfully fishing neighbour.

Now, the propelling winds on our earthly seas and sea-lochs are not always the most propitious for our earthly seamen. But happily on the heavenward waters the wind of God always listeth to fill the sails of the heavenward seamen. Only, the pity here is that the heavenward wind does not always find the sails of our souls spread out to catch the fulness of the heavenward gales. On the spiritual seas it is not the want of sufficient wind, but it is the want of sufficient canvas. Here it is always the bad shipbuilding, and the bad steering, that delays the ship and endangers the voyage. Then, again, on the heavenward seas, as well as on the earthward, the sails are made, and are hoisted, and are filled with wind according to the carrying power of the ship. A ship of narrow beam and small draught can carry comparatively little canvas,

and can thus command comparatively little of the propelling wind. But there was once a splendid Ship built on the Sea of Galilee that caught every breath of the wind of God, and that had that heavenward Wind without measure. And, after that Pattern-Vessel other lesser, but somewhat similar vessels have been built on that and on other seas, that have followed in its wake, and have been propelled by the same Wind, till they anchored and discharged their freight in the same harbour. The name of that masterpiece of shipbuilding and shipsailing, and the main names of the fleet that followed it will have already occurred to everybody.

Now, my brethren, is there a nobler or a more heart-thrilling sight to be seen than a stately ship, well out at sea, with every inch of sail spread and every sail filled to all its fulness with a steady and a propitious wind? As often as our eyes are gladdened by that sight at sea, our hearts are carried away till we call out,—God speed that stately ship to its desired and destined haven! And what must it be for that great company of saints and angels who stand waiting and watching on the heavenly shore, to see one human soul after another making for the haven above, and with every sail spread, and every spread sail filled to its utmost content with the Wind of God, and being wafted nearer and nearer to their predestined harbour every day and every hour! And with what a cheering of saints and angels do those happy ships anchor on the heavenly shore; safe for ever from the seas and the storms and the shipwrecks of this world.

My brethren, the sum is this: When at any time or in any place a breeze from heaven begins to blow, that moment up with all your sails! Under a sermon; or with your Bible in your hands at home; or when you are tarrying before God in secret; when you feel the rising breeze beginning to blow on your forehead, up with all your sails. And, if you are always on the watch to do that, you will soon be in that harbour where so many of your former friends are waiting you on the heavenly shore.

XXI

'LIKE JOHN IN THE EMPTY SEPULCHRE, I SAW, AND BELIEVED'

N a never-to-be-forgotten Sabbath morning the Laird of Brea was holding family worship in his Highland home in the Black Isle. He gave out and his assembled household sang his favourite Sabbath morning psalm :—

> 'Thou hast, O Lord, most glorious,
> Ascended up on high.'

And then he asked his son, who was at home from college, to read aloud his father's favourite Sabbath morning chapter. But when the reader came to the eighth verse of that great chapter his father heard no more that morning, for these words of that verse : 'That other disciple also went into the sepulchre, and he *saw*, and *believed*'—these words, somehow, took such a sudden and such a complete hold of Fraser's heart that morning that all that day, in the house, and by the way, and in the church, and till he fell asleep late that night, he thought of nothing else but '*He saw*, and

believed.' Fraser had read the Resurrection chapter a thousand times; but, somehow, his eyes were opened that morning to the eighth verse of that chapter as never before. Till in *The Book of the Intricacies of his Heart*, and in some hitherto unpublished papers of his, Fraser has left many memoranda, written from that Sabbath morning, some of which I will now reproduce to you for your learning.

Fraser often wondered at his own stupidity in having up to that morning so completely overlooked that so remorseful, so significant, and so suggestive verse. Not that he had been wholly blind to the glorious context. For it had been his devout wont to take his household through that great Resurrection chapter; himself seeing, and then doing his best to make them all see, the whole adorable scene. He had often pictured to them with what a holy joy our Lord would receive His returning life back again from His Father's hands that first Lord's Day morning. Just, Fraser would say, as our Lord was wont to receive His returning life from His Father's hands every new morning for the past three and thirty years, when He again awoke from last night's sleep. With His last breath, three days before, our Lord had said:—'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.' And now He received back His spirit for ever from those hands into which He had delivered it up on the Cross. And though it is not written by any of the four evangelists in so many words, Fraser had been wont to say to his listening household that for his part he believed that all the

time our newly awakened Lord was putting off the linen clothes, and the napkin that was wrapped about His head, and was folding them all neatly up as His mother had taught Him to do from a child; and all the time the shining One was rolling back the stone from the door of the Sepulchre, our Risen Lord was singing to Himself David's Sabbath morning psalm, as His wont had been every Sabbath morning in Nazareth where He was brought up. 'I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvellous are Thy works O my God, in me, and that my soul knoweth right well. How precious, also, are Thy thoughts unto me, O my God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when I awake I am still with Thee.' And, then, as soon as the stone was rolled away, the Resurrection and the Life stepped out into the light of the Lord's Day, with His glorious body clothed from head to foot with garments of immortality. James Fraser's anointed eyes had seen all that, and he had told his rejoicing household all that, on a thousand Sabbath mornings. But these overlooked words, 'that disciple *saw*, and *believed*,' these striking words had, somehow or other, never before taken hold of his mind and his heart as they did that memorable morning, as you will see immediately if I am successful in setting this remarkable man before you this evening.

As the devout and thoughtful laird of Brea came home from church that Sabbath evening and as he walked about alone in his beautiful

grounds as the sun was setting, personal application after personal application of that morning's text took complete possession of his mind and his heart, till he stopped in his walk time after time, and took out his tablets and made entry after entry of those personal applications on the sacred spot. Some of those personal applications, so far as I know, have never been recovered from that day to this, till to-night. Now, this is the first pencil-entry for that Sabbath night. I give it, as I have been able to decipher it from an unpublished and an almost illegible manuscript. 'Even the beloved disciple did not *believe* till he *saw*,' writes Fraser's pencil. 'Even the disciple who leaned on Jesus' bosom at Supper did not, up to that resurrection morning, know the Scriptures that his Master must rise again from the dead. And,' adds Fraser, 'I have been but too like that disciple in my long unbelief.' Then follow some instances of Fraser's long unbelief, till, like John, he was compelled to believe by what he saw displayed before his eyes. And the first entry of what Fraser did not believe till he lived to see it and to write it, was the great blessing for Fraser's soul that was bound up in his daily cross. He never puts its name on his daily cross in any of his most confidential writings that I possess. But I can see on every page how that daily cross, whatever it was, ate and ate into his heart continually till he sometimes all but bled to death under it. The author of *The Book of the Intricacies of his own Heart* did not always agree with the author of *The Saints' Rest* in some of the

deep and obscure doctrines of that day. But God soon made those two eminent saints of His to agree completely about His wisdom and His love toward them in their daily crosses. And He led them both to fall back on his much-experienced servant Martin Luther in this same matter. Both Fraser and Baxter were far happier at home than Luther was. You will have read the exquisitely beautiful letter that the reformer wrote to his little son about the paradise that is prepared for all good boys and girls. And your hearts must have bled as you went on to read what a daily cross that boy lived to be to Luther to the end of his days on earth. 'My daily cross at home is my best schoolmaster,' says Luther all his days. 'And,' says Richard Baxter, writing to us out of the same experimental school, 'when a man's daily cross once comes home to him from God's hand it speaks to him far more powerfully and far more prevailingly than the best preacher can ever speak.' 'What hot hearts we all have for the things of this life till our daily cross cools them!' exclaims Baxter. 'God comes and makes some great cross to crash in upon our children, or upon our health, or upon some of our possessions, till we are taught to set our affections on things above.' And Fraser agrees with Baxter in that; till I find them exclaiming together; I take their words *verbatim* from their own paradoxical lips: 'O healthful sickness! O comfortful sorrow! O gainful loss! O enriching poverty! Yes! O blessedest day in my whole earthly life, when my all-sanctifying

cross was bound by God's own hands on my bleeding back, and never to be taken off my bleeding back till all its God-appointed work was wrought in me!' Yes, the only wise God knew quite well what He was doing when He took the best tree in all the Black Isle and manufactured it into the Laird of Brea's lifelong cross. There are more applications than one that Fraser makes of this new text of his. But before I leave this first application of his must I copy out this additional entry; this penitential prayer, 'Shut and seal Thine ears, O my God, against all my rebellious complaints and prayers,' he says. 'Never mind what I cry in my agony when I forget myself and when I again kick out against Thy holy will with me. Whatever I spend the night watches importuning Thee for, turn Thy deafest ear toward my cry. Never, never yield to me in my madness. Never, never remove that sufficiently sore cross of mine; no, not for an hour, till I have learned to say under it, Thy will be done! No, no, take not my cross away, on any plea of mine, till it has completely, and for ever, worked out my salvation in me, as that sanctified cross of mine only can.' 'I came to see God, not man, in my daily cross,' writes Fraser, 'I never understood the Scriptures about my daily cross till an exegesis and a commentary of those deep Scriptures was written out, by myself, in my own tears, and in my own blood.' That, then, was Fraser's first personal application that he had to see fulfilled in himself before he would believe it. He had to see how his salvation

was bound up in his daily cross before he would believe that.

And then from that sight of his daily cross Fraser at last came to see the same divine wisdom and the same divine love in absolutely all things that came to him. He had been wont to pass over that great passage in Paul with a smile—that great passage where that great experimentalist says that all things work together for good to God's true people. Fraser had been wont to smile at that passage and to say to himself, 'Would God it were so with me!' But as God would have it Brea became at last as bold a preacher of that high doctrine as the apostle was himself. Take this passage from the intricacies of Fraser's heart. 'I was wont,' he writes, 'to dwell, and with no little bitterness, on some of my domestic and financial difficulties. But as time went on, and as I more and more learned to take all these things immediately from God's hand to me, I came to see and to confess to God and to myself, that both my father and my mother, and my brothers, and my sisters, and my brothers-in-law, and my wife, and my children, and, indeed, all my relationships and all my circumstances were the very best possible for me, and for God's purposes with me. And if any of my people in any of their tempers or in any of their habits or in any parts of their behaviour were not wholly and in everything to my mind I at last learned of God to adapt and modify myself to them in all things as I saw they had to adapt and modify themselves to me. And

when under any temptation I again fell from my equanimity and made my complaint and my accusation to Christ, He would take me to the Gospels and would ask me if I thought that His father, and His mother, and His brethren, and His sisters, and His brothers-in-law always believed in Him, and always gave Him His own way in the life of His family. Also He pointed out to me that as often as His home cross was too heavy for Him to bear, that night He stole out of the city and went up into a mountain apart, and came back to Nazareth next morning and took up His cross and went about His day's work as if He had never seen a cross. And, that night,' adds our autobiographer, 'I again saw, and believed that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Yes, off and on about that time, I so saw as ever after to believe that God was giving His whole mind to my case and was guiding and administering my case for me as if He had not another sinner in all the world to sanctify and to save but me. And till, I remember, I said in those days seven times every day: 'No! no! not my rebellious will in any of those things be done, but Thy holy will alone!'

I could keep you here all night over Fraser's illustrations of the text that he had to see before he would believe. Concerning some of his lifelong accumulations of unanswered prayer and that for some clearly promised things, he writes thus: 'I came at last to see and to acquiesce that as to the when and the how of the answer is for God's discretion

and not for my dictation. I came to see that my only business is to continue to be believing and importunate in my prayer. And at last I got a quiet heart by insisting with myself that God will, no doubt, attend to His business if I attend to mine. I came to see that my business is to pray on, and not to faint. I learned to pray importunately, and yet all the time not to intrude on things far too high for me.' Nay, not only all that, but this astonishing man so learned to love pure prayer that he continued to pray for things even after he had long seen that the answer was never to come in this life; and, indeed, till he was quite satisfied to live contentedly and to die quietly without the answer. 'I saw the blessedness of pure and defecated prayer,' he says; 'I saw that in my own case till I could not but believe it.'

You would not believe me if I told you how old this man of God was before he gave himself up wholly to the Word of God. I can scarcely believe my own eyes when I read that he had been wont to give up the last hour of every night to late suppers at Brea, and to healthing, and to playing at cards, and to other time-killing games. But God so handled him as to teach him that there was a better way than that for a man like him. 'I spent my last hour last night on the fourteenth of John,' he writes to Thomas Ross of Tain. 'I have known that chapter from a child; but it never took such a hold of my heart as it did last night. Till when my clock struck twelve, I remembered how David spent his night watches, till he wrote and said:

"Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." And when I was on my knees about all that at my bedside this of Paul to Timothy also came into my mind: "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation."' And, about the same time, writing to Thomas Ross, he says: 'I do not know how it is with you nowadays, but I go to bed now with a quiet heart and with a good conscience. And I sleep much sounder than I was wont to do after a night's healthing. And I awake next morning with a better taste in my mouth.' Our autobiographer came to see all that till he believed it and acted upon it to a rich and ripe old age.

But the thing that Fraser was slowest and longest in seeing and believing, if ever he came to see it and to believe it aright, was to see and believe God's wisdom and His love in permitting such a slow and such a stagnant and such an often backsliding sanctification in His best people. Why does the God Who so loves holiness, and Who loves nothing else, why does He not go on to perfect what He has so certainly begun? Year after year to his sin-wearied-out old age the holy law of God plunged deeper and deeper into Fraser's depraved heart till he was wellnigh driven to absolute despair. He saw the unspeakable evil of sin; its malignity, its depth, and its absolute unsearchableness, the curse of it, and the living hell of it. But along with that he came to see Christ, as, but for his awful sinfulness, he would never have seen Him. He came to

see Christ's sin-atoning blood and His justifying righteousness as he would never have seen that blood and that righteousness but for his long life of such slow and stagnant and backsliding sanctification. And all that more and more weaned his holiness-loving heart from the sweetest and best things of this life, and drew up his heart more and more to that land and that life where no sin shall ever enter, and where God shall wipe off all tears from His people's sanctified and glorified eyes. And this went on till he died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. Wherefore, for all these things, God is not ashamed to be known in Scotland as the God of James Fraser of Brea.

XXII

'SIGNIFYING WHAT DEATH HE SHOULD DIE FOR ME'

SOME ancient philosophers of the Eastern world were wont to fable an immense mountain of loadstone that always drew to its foot all men and all things that ever came near it. So extraordinary was the attracting power of that magnetic mountain over certain substances that if ever a passing ship came within sight of that mountain the iron nails that held that ship together were immediately drawn out of it, till the ship was left a heap of loose planks and broken boards on the rocks and the sands around. Such was the fable of some mystical philosophers of the ancient East.

But we do not follow any such cunningly devised fables when we preach to you that Calvary is the true and the only magnetic mountain that this world has ever seen; and that the Cross of Christ is the true and the only loadstone that draws, irresistibly, all men and all things to itself. This is the

sure word of our salvation that Mount Calvary, as dear old Goodwin always has it, is the one and the only 'rendezvous and refuge for all sinful men.' Let us listen then this evening, and with all our ears open, to what our Lord says to us about Himself and about His Cross. And may that divine loadstone draw all our hearts to our Saviour to-night for our everlasting salvation!

'And I, if I be lifted up.' 'There is a fine touch of pathos in that particle *if*,' says Alford on the text. 'For our Lord though He knew that He would be lifted up on the Cross to-morrow morning; yet, in the true and perfect humanity of His mind and His heart, He puts Himself for a moment into this seeming doubt about the events of to-morrow, and says: "*If*, indeed, it is so to be."' But our own Samuel Rutherford, long before Alford, is still better on this little word '*if*.' 'This grammatical particle,' says our fellow-churchman, 'is not at all a note of doubting; it does not make His crucifixion a matter of contingency or of uncertainty. The Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, is not in any dubiety here. He is not saying, Shall I, indeed, have to go to Calvary to-morrow? or, shall I somehow escape it at the eleventh hour? No!' indignantly exclaims Rutherford, shocked and scandalised at the mere suggestion. 'No! our Redeemer is not wavering in His work. Nor is He, for a moment, at all dubious or uncertain about how He is to finish His work. No! this is not the "*if*" of any uncertainty. But in saying, "I, *if* I be lifted up," He as good as says: "*When* I am lifted

up, such and such things will immediately follow upon that."'

But, what things? we may well ask. For they would need to be very great things that would at all account for, and that would at all explain and justify, the lifting up of the Son of God on the accursed tree. They would need to be very great wages that would at all adequately indemnify and recompense this Servant of God for the tremendous task He had been sent into this world to perform. It would need to be a very great joy, indeed, that was to be set before Him, for the sake of which He was to endure the Cross, and to despise the shame. Well, hear His own words about His wages and His joy. 'I,' He says, 'if I be lifted up will draw all men unto Me.' Few and familiar sounding words, perhaps, to our ears. But all the same they are absolutely unfathomable, absolutely unsearchable, and absolutely inexhaustible words; for all Almighty God's eternal purposes toward the children of men are all in those few words of His Son. All Almighty God's creating and redeeming and sanctifying decrees are all in those few words of His son. All the divine grace of God the Father, and all the redeeming love of God the Son, and all the renewing and sanctifying work of God the Holy Ghost—all these unspeakably blessed things are wrapped up in those few words of our Saviour. I, if I be lifted up upon the Cross, says the Son of God, I will draw all sinful men to Me for their everlasting salvation. And what all our everlasting salvation means and contains and

secures for us, time and eternity, all taken together, will not be able fully to disclose. As one, to whom it was all disclosed, says about it: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' That is to say: for them that the Son of God will draw to Him, when He is lifted up on His Cross.

'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.' All manner of sinful men that is. And all manner of sinful men are—as a matter of fact—drawn to the Cross of Christ. For God is in Christ reconciling all manner of sinful men to Himself, so as no longer to impute their trespasses to them. All manner of sinful men meet at the Cross of Christ, and are there reconciled, first to God, and then to one another. The sinner and the sinned against meet at the Cross of Christ; the murderer and the murdered meet there; the seducer and the seduced; the slanderer and the slandered; the reviler and the reviled; the oppressor and the oppressed; the heartbreaker and the heartbroken are all drawn to the foot of the Cross; they all meet one another there, and are there reconciled to one another. Look at them! as they come from the east and from the west and from the north and from the south, and from all the ages and generations of sinful men! Who are these that are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? These are Adam and Eve, with all their sinful children hanging at their girdles. And that is Abel, the first forerunner of Him who for very envy

was murdered by His brethren. And these are Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and David, and with them a great multitude, who had not seen the day of Christ; but who would have been drawn to Him, and to His Cross, had they seen His day, and had they had His Gospel preached to them. And of such as had seen His day; look at Peter, and James, and John, and Thomas, and the woman of Samaria, and the woman of Syro-Phœnicia, and Mary Magdalene, and the thief on the Cross, and the treasurer of the Queen of Ethiopia, and the jailor of Philippi. And, after them, a multitude from the west and from the north, such as Martin Luther, and Jacob Behmen, and John Bunyan, and Alexander Brodie, and James Fraser; and from still further west, Thomas Shepard, and David Brainerd, and Jonathan Edwards. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

And then you should know that there is a remarkable 'reading'—as our New Testament scholars call it—a remarkable reading, at this point in some of the most ancient manuscripts. And that remarkable reading is this: 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men, and *all things*, unto Me.' And indeed, it looks almost as if Paul had had that remarkable reading in one of his apostolic parchments; for in writing to the Ephesians concerning the Cross of Christ, and all the rewards thereof, he has these remarkable words: 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will, in the fulness of the

times, gather together, in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him.' And full of the same glorious prospect he writes to the philosophically-minded Colossians and says to them: 'And having made peace by the blood of His Cross; by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in heaven, or things on earth.' But this so bold and so all-embracing reading is quite beyond our highest reach in this life. Enough for us to know that we who were sometime alienated and enemies by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled, in the body of His flesh, through death, to present us holy and unblamable and unreprovable in His sight.

But now, after all that, this question arises; and it is a question that cannot be repressed, this question: Has Christ crucified ever drawn you? For, mind you, that is the one question for you, as it is for all men. No other question that either God or man can ever put to you is for one moment to be compared with that question. Well, if Christ lifted up has not yet drawn you, why is that? Is it that you have gone so far away from Christ, and are at this moment spending your life so far away from Him that He cannot get a hearing from you, nor a hold of you, nor can get near you to bless and save you? Is it that, for some reason, you will not allow your mind to go out at any time in His direction, if you can help it? You know yourself. For one thing, do you ever on a Sabbath night sit down to read a book because it is about His Cross?

You know surely that there are such books in the world. He has seen to that. Well, does He ever see you with one of them in your hand? Or do you pass all such books by because His name is in them? Now God has so made you that even Christ Himself cannot draw you to His Cross, or to Himself, against your will. Well, then, will you not come to Him, and to His Cross to-night? For He has had this text written of old, and has had it preached upon this night, in order that, if never before, this night may be your accepted time, and the happy opportunity of your salvation.

There is no mystery about this matter; nor is there any difficulty in it. You know quite well what it is to be drawn to any one. You say it yourself every day. You say that you feel drawn to such and such a man, or that you do not feel drawn to him. Well, that is exactly what Jesus Christ says in the text; or does He rather say about you, that you will not let Him draw you? Well, let Him say that no longer. Yield yourself up, and at once, to the smallest motion of your heart toward Him to-night.

And, then, let all those who have been already drawn to Christ lifted up, continue to live and die under that same drawing. Let not your great sinfulness ever come between you and His drawing. For He is lifted up on His Cross with a view to your great sinfulness. It is your great sinfulness that will alone account for, and justify, the crucifixion of the Son of God. Let, then, your great sinfulness be for His greater glory in you, and on

your account. Let Him see of the travail of His soul in you. And if your great sinfulness drives you every day to His Cross, and if His Cross draws you every day to Him and to it, then you will not only be saved, but you will be saved with a great salvation. Let then your great, and it may be your ever-growing sinfulness only the more shut you up to Christ and to His Cross continually, till you say continually with the apostle Paul that you are being continually crucified with Christ and that all your life and all your hope come to you from His Cross. I will not insist with you that the more sinfulness you have, the better it will be for your salvation. I will not insist upon that, lest you be not able as yet to bear that. But for the comfort of some others I will venture on this illustration of this subject: The more hidden iron there is in any mass of iron-ore, the more powerfully does the loadstone draw to itself both the iron and the ore; both the hidden iron and the ore that surrounds it and is mixed up with it. Now, your secret sinfulness is like that hidden iron; and your whole heart and your whole life is like the ore that surrounds the iron and is mixed up with it. And the Cross of Christ is the divine loadstone that draws to itself, first, your sin, and then, with your sin, your whole self; your past sins, your present sinfulness, and your whole self, body, soul, and spirit, are all drawn irresistibly to Christ lifted up.

Now, to bring all that to a point. Let Christ and His Cross draw you, as you sing your closing praise this Sabbath night. 'Come, now,' He says

to you, looking straight at you—'come now, and let us reason together. And, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' And when He says that to you, rise up on your feet, and make this answer to Him on the spot—say 'Yes!' And say:

'Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, of that free love,
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.'

XXIII

'THE BOOK OF THE INTRICACIES OF MY HEART'

JAMES FRASER, laird of Brea, and minister of Culross, was a very able man in a day of very able men. And his high value to us, and his lasting value to us, lies in this that he laid out all his great ability upon the pursuit of personal holiness and experimental religion. He was a very scholarly man also and a very deeply read man. But his deepest book after his Bible was always the book of his own heart. There were many other able and scholarly and deeply read men in that day in Scotland and in England; but was there another man anywhere who had such an intricate heart as James Fraser had, and who watched and wrote down all the intricacies of his heart, as James Fraser did? If there was another such intricate-hearted man and a man with such an intricately written autobiography, I do not know him. James Fraser would have pleased Apollo, whose one injunction to all his worshippers always was to know themselves before they intruded themselves into his

holy presence. He would have pleased Solomon also, who so scorned those fools whose eyes are in the ends of the earth. He would have pleased Augustine also, who so reproved the men of his day because they went out to gaze at the heights of the mountains, and at the depths of the seas, and at the orbits of the planets, and at the courses of the comets, but who had no eyes for the heights, and the depths, and the comets, and the meteors of which their own hearts and their own homes were full. But best of all, James Fraser would have pleased, and he did please, Him who had this intricate Scripture written out beforehand for Fraser's guidance, and direction, and encouragement, this so intricate Scripture that ran in Fraser's New Testament in these intricate words: 'For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' Every syllable of that so intricate Scripture was written out for James Fraser beforehand and he did not neglect it nor did he cast it behind his back.

Now to convey to you some idea of this remarkable man and of his remarkable autobiography, I will transcribe to you the contents of some of his so amazingly analytical and so amazingly heart-searching chapters. Take these then as so many fair specimens:—

'Four steps toward my conversion,' 'Eight evidences of my conversion,' 'Eight marks of that

faith which saves the soul,' 'Seven cracks in my saving faith,' 'Nineteen marks of growth in grace,' 'Twenty-seven evidences of regeneration,' 'Eleven characters of a Pharisee,' 'Twenty-five things that have done me good,' 'Fourteen things that have done me evil,' 'Five steps towards a sad decay,' 'Nine steps in my recovery from my sad decay,' 'Twenty-two comfortable instructions as to my saving interest in Christ,' 'Ten rules how to follow Christ,' 'Twelve rules for the government of my tongue,' 'Fourteen fresh mercies declared,' 'Thirteen of Satan's devices discovered and exposed,' 'Ten intricate errors in the life of faith corrected'—but I must stop, for I fear your patience would fail you before I had taken you through the half of all the joints, and all the marrow, and all the thoughts, and all the intents of Fraser's so intricate and so intricately handled heart.

Now, my brethren, I do not know what you feel and what you say when you are told about such a self-examining saint of God as James Fraser was. For myself, I will tell you the truth about what I feel and what I will say. And it is this. Instead of wearying of him and of his ways with God and with himself, and instead of blaming and correcting him as so many do, I for one, will rather say that to my mind our covenanted fellow-countryman was quite worthy to take his place among those holy creatures in heaven who are so full of eyes within that they cover their feet and their faces with the wings that God has given them for that purpose and then rest not day and night, saying: Holy,

holy, holy, Lord God Almighty. But, my brethren, I am persuaded better things of you than that you will ever weary of the recorded ways of God with His people and of their recorded ways with Him. You are not Solomon's fools who have their eyes everywhere but on their own hearts. You do not censure those men who give all diligence to make their own calling and election sure. You do not think that David, or Heman, or Asaph, or Solomon, or Paul, or Luther, or Shepard, or Fraser could give too much attention and too much diligence to the keeping of their own hearts. You see men of science setting up costly observatories wherefrom to watch the motions of the stars, to record the changes and the strength of the winds, and to register the fluctuations of heat and cold in the atmosphere. And again you see business men giving all their thoughts, day and night, to the rises and the falls of the share list and the money market. And you will not think those men mad who gave some real attention to the weather within and to the markets in which their immortal souls are bought and sold. You must all have read these warning words in the Wisdom of Solomon which run thus: 'When the whole accounts of this mortal life are at the last day wound up, then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the faces of such as have scorned him: and such as have made no account of his great labours. When they see his finished salvation they shall stand amazed at the wonder of it, so far will it be beyond what they had looked for. And, repenting, they shall say within them-

selves—This is he whom we had, sometime, in derision, and held him up for a problem of reproach. We, fools that we were, accounted his life to be madness, and his end to be without honour. But now, he is numbered among the most chosen of the children of God: and his everlasting lot is high up among the chiefest of the saints of God.'

Now among a thousand special providences that filled Fraser's spiritual life full and that made his spiritual life sometimes a very strait gate and a very narrow way, take just this one so 'intricate' instance. One never-to-be-forgotten day a few censorious and unsympathetic words were spoken to Fraser by a member of his family in his library at Brea. The person who spoke these momentous words immediately and for ever forgot them. But as God would have it Fraser never forgot them. In five minutes after those fateful words fell on Fraser's ear and heart his whole future was changed. And not his whole future alone, but through that the future of hundreds of men in the Scotland of that day and this day—so intricately was Fraser's life woven in with so many other men's lives. Indeed, to the day of his death there was not a single day, scarcely a single hour, that he was not led back to that crisis-morning in his own study at Brea. So intricately did he see all his life to be warped and woven and knotted in with so many other lives. 'Fearful! fearful!' he would sometimes fall down on his knees and say, 'Wonderful! wonderful!' he would say. 'Who is a God like the God who rules and overrules my life?' he would say. And till he

preached some of his most memorable and most fruitful sermons on the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm. And sermons that seemed full of the Holy Ghost to the Culross congregation who heard them.

Now, have you any such intricate providences in your life as that? Did any one ever speak three words to you that altered all your after life and the lives of many more? Yes! the only difference between Fraser's life and our life is this that he watched and wrote out God's intricate operations in his heart and his life, whereas we pay no attention. Till the God of our life has nothing left to say about us but this: 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know: My people doth not consider.'

Among his many crosses also Fraser had one specially intricate and specially secret and specially agonising and specially lifelong cross, that would have driven him absolutely mad but for a lesson from heaven he got one fearful night. As a matter of fact, so did that constant cross madden him one fearful night that he rose from off his bed and was within an inch of taking his own life. But at that awful moment a Hand from heaven laid hold of him and led him back to his knees and to his bed. And it came to him that midnight like the voice from heaven that it was: it came to him always to take that cross immediately, and directly, and believingly, and dutifully, from Christ's own hand. What had always so exasperated and maddened Fraser heretofore was that he had taken his cross

from the hand of the man who was the occasion and the instrument of it. But ever after that night he set aside and kept out of sight that injurious man, and went up to Christ Himself, and bowed his head before Him. Ever after that night of his agony, Fraser was exactly like Christ Himself in the night of His agony. For our Lord did not take His cross from Pilate's hand nor from the hand of the high priest. Our Lord lifted His eyes above all mortal men till He saw His Father only and His Father's holy will alone. And that quieted His agonised heart and kept Him from being beside Himself with the terrors and the horrors of Gethsemane and Calvary. And often when he was crushed to the earth under his lifelong cross Fraser would boldly borrow his Divine Forerunner's words, and would say with Him: 'As the Father gives me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.' Till the old Mansion-House of Brea in the Black Isle was the upper room in Jerusalem over again.

Dear John Donne has one of his great Augustinian sermons on the 'Fifty uncleannesses' of the Old Testament and the fifty expiations that were provided for those fifty uncleannesses. Now this so intricate New Testament man of ours had his fifty uncleannesses also. Only there was one supreme uncleanness that defiled Fraser almost more than all the other forty-nine. Now what would you think it was? Was it 'carding'? No. Was it 'healthing'? No. Was it any of the sins of the table or of the bed? No. I will tell you

what it was, for you would never guess. Fraser had Paul and Luther and the Shorter Catechism by heart, and it was the tenth commandment with what is required and what is forbidden and the Scripture proofs. And with simply naming Fraser's supreme uncleanness I will leave it. And that because those who are not driven beside themselves with that same so besetting sin will never understand either Paul, or Luther, or the Catechism or Fraser. And those who have that so intricate, and so spiritual, and so diabolical sin in themselves, they do not need to go to Fraser, nor to any other man, for an autobiography of their secret sin, and their secret shame on account of their secret sin.

Now after all that you will be prepared to hear and to believe that this man's whole autobiography is full, from board to board, of God's intricate relations with him and with his intricate relations with God. And now—to borrow this word of his from Fraser—do you ever think what an intricate mind and what an intricate heart God's mind and God's heart must be? Try to think of a Mind and a Heart that can see and hear and rule and overrule all the intricacies of all the minds and all the hearts of all men! To have seen and to have heard and to have ruled and to have overruled Fraser's one so intricate mind and heart and life alone—what a Divine Mind and Heart that must have been! But to see and to hear and to rule and to overrule all the minds and all the hearts of all men, past, present, and to come! Oh! the depth of the

riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? And yet, past finding out as God's so intricate ways are with us all, it is our best blessedness in this present life to believe and to be sure that God knows every intricacy of His own heart, as well as of our hearts: and knows all those intricacies as well as if He had no other hearts but yours and mine on His hands. O! think much and think often and think always about God, my brethren. And think far more than you have ever yet done about yourselves. And when you are overwhelmed with yourselves, turn always and more and more to God, and to God in Christ. Walk with God in Christ, my brethren. Look to God in Christ. Lean upon God in Christ. Trust God in Christ. And above all else, love God who is in Christ reconciling the world, with all its intricacies and with all its iniquities, unto Himself.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

XXIV

'HE TAKES OVER ALL MY OLD AND ACCUMULATED DEBTS'

THE Epistle to Philemon was more and more a great favourite with our Fraser. And no wonder. For in his exquisite and evangelical Epistle to Philemon Paul positively surpasses himself. In all his Epistles the apostle is the perfection of a Christian gentleman. But in this so delightful little Epistle he excels himself. The pathos, the tenderness, the refinement of feeling, the sweet Christian courtesy of the Epistle to Philemon, all combine to place it away up at the head of all the peace-making letters that have ever been written in any age or in any language. The Epistle to Philemon is simply perfect in its taste, in its tact, in its tenderness, and in its heart-subduing and heart-winning power.

Paul the aged is a prisoner in Rome. And Onesimus is Philemon's runaway slave. And as God would have it Onesimus in his flight has found his way to Rome in order to hide in that

great city from his pursuing master Philemon. By a succession of divinely guided steps that we are not enabled to trace Onesimus was, somehow, brought into contact with Paul. And the result was that Onesimus became one of the apostle's early Roman converts. 'My son Onesimus,' Paul says, 'whom I have begotten in my bonds.' But in the process of his conversion Onesimus had been led to tell Paul all about who and what he was, and how he had run away from his rightful master Philemon. To whom he would now fain return to deliver himself up if Paul would use his influence with Philemon to appease his righteous anger and to receive back into his forgiveness his runaway slave. But then all this time Philemon himself was one of Paul's spiritual sons. And not only so, but he was one of Paul's dearest and most intimate friends in all those apostolic churches. And hence the rare contents and the rare character of this peace-making Epistle that Onesimus took back with him to Colosse. Every line of it is a shining seal set to the reality of Onesimus's repentance and conversion; even as every line of it is a still more shining seal set to Philemon's fine Christian character. All the three men concerned are at their very best in this shining little letter: Philemon, the injured master, and Onesimus, the injurious slave, and, above all, the peace-making apostle himself. 'Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, unto Philemon my dearly beloved brother. Grace to thee, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, I beseech thee for my son

Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds. Who, in time past, was to thee unprofitable, but is now profitable both to thee and to me. Whom I have sent to thee again. For, perhaps, he departed from thee for a season, that thou shouldst receive him back for ever. But not any more as a slave; but, above a slave, a brother beloved. If thou count me, therefore, a partner with thee, as thou art with me, receive him as myself. And if he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account. I, Paul, have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it. Albeit, I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own soul besides.' The whole of the Epistle to Philemon is intellectually, and emotionally, and spiritually, and skilfully a perfect piece.

Now, what if in all this 'earth be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein, each to other like, more than on earth is thought?' What if Paul's Epistle to Philemon is but an early incident in, and an abiding illustration of, a great Gospel Dispensation that is going forward among ourselves to this day? Yes, most certainly, so it is. For while the Epistle to Philemon is a piece of real and actual apostolic history, it is at the same time a perfect picture and an impressive parable of what is going on every day before God and among ourselves. For we are all every day wronging and injuring and impoverishing one another. While God is taking upon Himself, and upon His Son Jesus Christ, all our wrongs and all our injuries, and all our

impoverishments, and is healing all our wrongs, and all our injuries, and is discharging all our debts for us every day. And He is thus both calling us and enabling us to forgive one another and to receive back one another in love and in a lasting peace. Even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and has accepted us back in the Beloved, and that to everlasting life.

We are not told just in what ways and just to what an extent Onesimus had wronged Philemon. Nor just how deep Onesimus had run himself into Philemon's debt. But the whole Epistle goes to show that the wrong was not little nor the debt small. All the past relations and all the past behaviours of Philemon to Onesimus, and of Onesimus to Philemon, were best known to themselves. But now to Paul also through the full confession of Onesimus. And no more are all our past relations and behaviours to one another known to any one but to ourselves and to God, and that whether we confess it all to Him or no.

And just as we cannot at this distant day even imagine all that had gone on between Philemon and Onesimus in their pagan and pre-Christian and unconverted days, no more can any one imagine nor would any one believe all that may have gone on between us and those who once wronged us, or were once wronged by us. Philemon, in past days, may have bought and sold Onesimus and his wife and his children as if they were so many brute beasts. And, then, Onesimus may have retaliated on Philemon and on his family, as we know that

ill-used slaves did retaliate in those days on their inhuman masters. And so is it still: even in our Christian civilisation, and among our Christianised conditions of life. Some of you—who knows?—may have as good as bought and sold the bodies and souls of men and women and children you at one time lived with. Some of you may have broken up and for ever ruined some one's happy home long ago. Some of you may have fatally shipwrecked some one's whole earthly life and for ever blasted all their earthly and even their heavenly hopes. Some of you—but you yourselves best know what it was you did to them, and they know, and God knows. And all their tears on your account are to-day kept in His bottle. And all your past and all their past is set down under your name and theirs in His awful judgment book. As it is written: 'The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven; and His eyes behold, and His eyelids try the children of men. Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee; our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance. Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? Even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me! even the night shall be light about me! Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.' Now, if that were all that was to be said,

what would be left to the best of us but a certain fearful looking for of judgment? For we know Him who hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. But that is not all. For, at this fearful state and stage of things we take up a better Book than the Book of Judgment, and we find the place where this is written: 'Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood; that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' That is to say, the grace of God is such, and the redemption that is in Christ Jesus is such, and His sin-atoning blood is such, and our faith in His sin-atoning blood is such, that God is seen, by all heaven and earth, to be just, even in justifying such great wrongdoers and such deep debtors to God and man as we are.

Now my brethren, that is the Gospel. That is the good news. That is the evangelical message. And that is what is this day preached unto you. As Paul in another place has it: 'Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; and, behold! all things are become new. And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself; not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as

though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.'

And now the God of redemption having reconciled us to Himself, and Himself to us, by the blood of Christ, He goes Himself to all those men who are not yet reconciled to His redeemed people and He says to them exactly what Paul here says to Philemon concerning Onesimus. He points to you and to me, and He says to all those who have ought against us, He says to them, 'If thou wilt count me for a partner, if thou wilt enter into a compact of peace with me; then receive that injurious son of mine as myself. And if he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that to mine account, and I will repay it.' Not only does God say that to the men and women whom we have wronged, but He refuses to forgive them the wrongs they themselves have done to God and man, unless they are willing to forgive and to be reconciled to us. And more, and better than even that, He puts His own meek and sweet and forgiving Spirit into their wronged and angry hearts, and in that way He both enables and constrains all our most sworn enemies to forgive us and to be at an everlasting peace with us. You will easily see that there are heights, and depths, and 'intricacies' here, as Fraser said, into which, even the New Testament, at its very best, does not fully enter, and does not wholly open up. But of this the New

Testament sufficiently assures us that when the end comes, and before Christ finally delivers up the kingdom to God the Father, it will be made evident to all men that no manner of wrong that any of the redeemed have done to man or woman or child will be left unredressed. And that no one farthing of their debt will be left unpaid. Just how Jesus Christ, out of His unfathomable wisdom and unsearchable riches, will do all that, and when, and where, He will do all that, we must, meantime, leave to Him who has the wisdom, and the grace, and who has all the keys of heaven and earth and hell in His hands. Enough for us to know that He says to all to whom we stand in any debt, 'I, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have written it with My own hand, and I will repay it.' And, O! how blessed is that assurance! not so much to those to whom He pays that debt, as to those for whom He pays it! How blessed is that divine assurance to every burdened and broken heart among His people! For how could they live in peace of mind for a day, in grace on earth or in glory in heaven, unless they believed that all their heavy debts to all men, as well as to God, were sure to be all repaid, and that all the wrongs they have ever done were sure to be compensated for and fully redressed? Could we sit down in peace of mind even in heaven itself if any one was left in the outer darkness whom we had helped to plunge down into that darkness? How could we begin to be merry in our Father's house while any one on earth or in hell was gnashing his teeth at us and at

our blessedness? How could God Himself succeed in wiping all tears from our eyes, while any man, or any woman, or any child, was weeping tears that our hands had at any time wrung from their hearts? But no—'Comfort My people,' saith your God. 'Speak comfortably to My people, and say to them that all the wrongs they ever did will all be atoned for, and that all the debts they ever contracted will all be paid, and that to the uttermost farthing. Say to them: Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, and hath the keys at His girdle, wherewith to repay all that His people owe to any man, living or dead, in time or in eternity.

Now, my brethren, if these Scriptures have this evening in any way awakened your sleeping consciences concerning any old wrongs you ever did to any one go this very night to Jesus Christ—you know where to find Him—go and beseech Him, out of His unsearchable riches, to undertake and take over and settle all your outstanding accounts for you. And to help you in your interview with Him take the Epistle to Philemon in your hand and point Him to it, and say to Him out of it, Shall His apostle be more pitiful and more kind to the runaway Onesimus than He Himself will be to you? And watch what He will say to you on the spot, and then watch all your days what He will do for you. And while He does His Pauline part for you, be you sure to do your own proper

part in every painful case of that kind. If you have wronged, or in any way have impoverished, any man or woman, and if they, or any of theirs, are still in this world, and if it is at all in your power, do not let Zacchæus, the chief of the publicans, excel you in your reparations and repayments. But begin at once to act so that you will be able to say: 'Behold, O my Lord, if I have wronged any one, or if I owe any one anything, behold I restore to them and to theirs fourfold.' And He will say in answer concerning you: 'This day is My salvation come to this man's house. Forasmuch as he also is a son of faithful Abraham.'

XXV

'I NOW BOTH LIVE AND WORK FAR MORE EVANGELICALLY THAN I WAS WONT TO DO'

'I NOW both live and work far more evangelically than I was wont to do.' So writes James Fraser, one of the most intellectually able and one of the most spiritually minded of men, in his *Memoirs* of Himself. There was a time, he tells us, when he both read and heard about Jesus Christ in the most unevangelical, and as a consequence in the most unintelligent and most misunderstanding way. There was a time when he was like Luther, who tells us that he was wont to read and hear about Jesus Christ in a historical way only. The young monk had not as yet been taught to read the four Gospels in an evangelical, a spiritual, a personal, and an appropriating way. He had never been taught why God had sent His Son into this world, and why Jesus Christ had lived and died, as He did live and die. He had never as yet been led to ask what all that had to do with Martin Luther. And you will all remember how John Bunyan, Luther's

English disciple, was wont to enjoy those parts of his Bible that told him about Joshua and his wars, and about Samson and his strength, and about David and his victorious encounter with Goliath, and about Daniel in the den of lions. But as for Paul's Epistles the young tinker could not away with them. It is not the Bible, my brethren, Book of God as it all is; it is not even the four Gospels, and the Pauline Epistles however learnedly studied and however eloquently preached; it is the evangelical interpretation, and it is the personal application, of what they all contain; it is that which alone will lead us into the true mind of God in them, and into the true meaning, and real intent, of the life and death of Jesus Christ. 'The history of the Cross, and the mystery of the Cross, are two very different things,' says that masterly experimental divine, Walter Marshall, of Hursley. And it is the evangelical mystery of the Cross in which all its redeeming and all its saving and all its sanctifying power resides. Now an intellectually able man and a truly converted man and an increasingly spiritually minded man, as the laird of Brea is, he does not say that he has already attained, or is already perfect. But what he does say is of the very deepest interest and importance to us all: 'I now both live and work,' he says, 'far more evangelically than I was wont to do.' Let us now go on to trace some of the steps and stages of his growingly evangelical life, and that because our own salvation lies in the same experience.

Now, if you remember the circumstances of James

Fraser's conversion, you will naturally think that he was surely sufficiently evangelical from the very beginning of his religious life. You will remember what a deep and what a decided change he underwent during his college life in this city. You will remember what a wonderful communion-week he spent when he was a student of seventeen in Edinburgh University. You cannot have forgotten what a Paul-like sight he got of his Saviour; God revealing His Son in that young student in Scotland very much as He revealed His Son in that young Pharisee in Israel. But just as Paul long after his wonderful conversion is still heard confessing and complaining that he has not even yet attained to the full evangelical understanding, and to the full evangelical apprehension of Christ, so was it with the young laird of Brea. And so is it with ourselves. Whatever the reality and whatever the intensity of our spiritual experience to begin with, the life of evangelical faith and evangelical holiness is so deep and is so spiritual that it takes a long lifetime to carry any of us into the more and more inward experiences of that life. The unsearchable needs of our sinful nature, and over against that, the unsearchable riches of Christ; these things are such that they take a man to old age to discover them and to deal with them in a truly evangelical way. Take the most mature and the most evangelically taught man in this house this evening, and he will be the foremost to say with Paul, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that

I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.' That is to say, there are evangelical discoveries still to be made, and evangelical attainments still to be reached, by the best of us, that make all our past discoveries, and all our past attainments to be forgotten as we still reach forward, and ever forward, to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

As an illustration of Fraser's increasingly evangelical life take his repentance for his past sins. At one time his repentance was almost wholly made up of a slavish fear of death and judgment. He could not sleep at nights for terror of where he might awake before morning. A horror would sometimes take hold of him that would almost drive him to self-destruction. His bed would be surrounded by the same ghosts and hobgoblins that howled around the pilgrim when he entered the dark river till in great measure he lost his senses. 'Ah! my brother,' said he, and refused to be comforted. 'Ah! my brother, if the sins of my youth had indeed been forgiven, as I had hoped they were, surely my Saviour would not forsake me in the swellings of Jordan in this way!' So was it many a miserable night with Fraser of Brea. He felt sure that God was reserving evil for him and that there was nothing left for him but a fearful looking for of judgment. But as his new life went on, as he grew in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Saviour, his repentance became less and less legal, and more and more evangelical. In his own words, his repentance consisted now not so much in a fearful looking for

of judgment, but much more in a sweet melting of heart toward God and man for his past sins against them. Now, that, my brethren, in one word, is evangelical repentance. It is a sweet melting of heart that you should ever have so sinned, and against such a God and such a Saviour. You will all remember, then, what to ask of God, and what to follow after—not so much an awful horror of heart, horrible as your sins may have been, but rather, a more and more stricken and contrite heart, a more and more sweet melting of heart, both toward God and man.

And, then, we find Fraser describing his growingly evangelical faith in this striking way: 'I learned to live less and less in myself and on myself and more and more in and on Jesus Christ, as made of God to me all my need. I less and less looked to any of my own experiences, or attainments, or feelings, or affections: but on Christ as made of God all that for me and to me. And not on Him as sensibly felt and fully possessed by me and in me, but solely and always as offered to me in the Gospel.' That, my brethren, in James Fraser's memorable words, that is the perfection of evangelical faith. It is to look to Christ alone, as if we did not even so much as exist ourselves. And it is to look to heaven alone, as if this earth and its attainments did not so much as exist for us. We have it in its evangelical perfection in Paul: 'I am crucified with Christ,' says Fraser's forerunner; 'nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith

of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.'

And as it was more and more with him in his life of evangelical repentance and evangelical faith, so was it in his evangelical love, and in his evangelical joy, and in his evangelical good hope, and in his evangelical humility, and in all his other evangelical holiness of heart and life. In all these things he became more and more evangelical, as he grew in grace, and in the better and better knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And all the time he is candid enough and grateful enough to acknowledge that it was the evangelical preaching he heard that by degrees so evangelised his mind and his heart and his life. He owed much also to the evangelical sermons he himself composed and preached, and to the evangelical authors he continually read, and he owed no little to the evangelical journals he kept, and the evangelical letters he took courage to write. All these things worked together to make him the great evangelical preacher and pastor and author he himself came to be. Take this as a specimen: 'When I was at my worst, and was saying, surely I shall never escape this awful bondage and this awful darkness, my Lord would find out for me both men and books to quicken me. Sometimes when I was at the point of spiritual death, the Lord would consider me, and He would condescend to me, and would send to me some good man or some good book, which would at once quicken me and strengthen me. Sometimes meeting with a true

Christian and conversing with him would do it, and nothing did me more good than written narrations of God's dealings with the souls of His people. Likewise, being in the south, the Lord trysted me with a powerful evangelical ministry, which did greatly revive me. Many a time, by means of that ministry, was my swooning life restored, and was I brought up from the gates of death. And all these evangelical waterings sanctified me more and more, both in my heart and in my life, and thus more and more I entered deeper and deeper into the life of grace, and into the evangelical knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' What a lesson to all our ministers, so that here in the south all sinful and sad-hearted men may through us also be trysted with a powerful evangelical ministry. And what a lesson to our people to tryst themselves to such a ministry, north or south, as was so blessed in the south to the tempest-tossed laird of Brea.

But all this time some men here who have been following all that, and with the greatest interest and anxiety, they will fall back and will say that such things are far too high for them, and that they can never expect to attain to such things; and, indeed, that it is cruel in me to hold up such things to their defeat and to their despair. O no! O no! Don't say that! Don't think that! If I were able to-night to take you to the end of this wonderful man's memoirs of himself, you would see that he was down to the end just as you are to-night. And far worse than you are to-night. For all these spiritual attainments, and all these evangelical experiences,

only drove him into a deeper despair, when, again, the sin that, all the time, did so easily beset him, again overcame him and laid him low. He was only the more broken in pieces when he again fell, till, for a season, his agony of remorse was simply indescribable. But, when he was in these sad straits, he remembered what he had already learned, and he fell back on his evangelical repentance, and on his evangelical faith. That is to say, all his remaining sinfulness only the more shut him up to Christ. And that far more than ever before. Till he came to see it, and to accept it, that his life on earth was lengthened out, and was filled up with all manner of temptations, and trials, and crooks, and crosses, and grievous falls, just in order that he might learn more and more what the grace of God really is, and who, and what, Jesus Christ really is. Year after year, his pride was more and more humbled, and his self-righteousness was more and more made rags and dung to him, as to the prophet and the apostle, and his heart was more and more broken in pieces within him, and all in order that Christ might come to His own in His sinful servant. And till it came to him to have Christ in his heart and his life, and nothing but Christ. Christ first and Christ last, in life and in death, in grace and in glory. And, till he came, before he died, both to read and to preach nothing else but this: To me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Now, all this was not written for James Fraser's sake alone, that he lived, and worked, and read, and wrote, and preached more and more evangelically,

but for us also. For me, first, that you may be trysted in this church with an evangelical ministry. And, then, that your lifelong conversion and your lifelong repentance, and your faith and your humility, and your love, and your good hope, and your joy in Christ, may all be becoming, every day, more and more evangelical. In the words of the text, that you may more and more, every day, 'grow in evangelical grace, and in the evangelical knowledge of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, both now, and for ever. Amen.'

XXVI

THE BOOK THAT BREA WROTE ON THE BASS ROCK WITH NO BOOK BESIDE HIM BUT HIS BIBLE AND HIMSELF

FOR an evangelical masterpiece like Fraser of Brea on Justifying Faith we must go to the Lutherans, or to the Calvinists, or to the Puritans, or to the Presbyterians. The Catholics and the Anglicans have their own masterpieces; but with some noble exceptions, Richard Hooker for one, they are not on the Pauline faith that alone justifies the ungodly. And over and above its evangelical value to its properly prepared readers what will always give a truly patriotic interest to this remarkable little book is the fact that it was written in a Covenanter's prison cell on the Bass Rock and with no book beside its author but his Bible. Amid the surging waves of the North Sea, with the flocks of solan geese screaming incessantly in his ear, and with 'a rabble of savage soldiers' all about him, James Fraser planned and executed this true masterpiece of apostolical and evangelical and experimental religion. Jacob Behmen was wont to say that he had no books, he had only himself. And when he was in his prison

on the Bass Rock the laird of Brea had no books but only his Bible; his Bible and his own scholarly and intricate and saintly self.

As God would have it, as the Covenanter laird of Brea lay in his Bass Rock cell, and as he paced his daily round under his military guard, this all-important, ever-present, and ever-pressing problem filled and fascinated his powerful mind: this supreme problem—How shall I, the chief of sinners, find an immediate and an abiding acceptance with God? And how shall I stand fast in that acceptance amid all my indwelling sinfulness, and amid all my daily outbreaks of actual transgression? And as he read day and night in David and in Paul, and day and night pondered and prayed and believed, by degrees no less than six Gospel grounds of justifying faith were revealed to him, on all of which his God would have him to rest his own faith, and then to set those six grounds down in his manuscript, till such time as he could send out his printed book to find its fit readers in evangelical and constitutional Scotland.

In his own clear-headed and sure-footed way Brea begins his through-going book with an all-important chapter on What are *not* to be the foundations of our faith and our hope and our full assurance. I will sum up that true and able chapter in one word. Nothing whatever of ours; nothing whatever in ourselves; nothing that we possess by nature, and nothing that we can attain to by grace can ever be to us a sure rest and a solid support for our faith for forgiveness and for our hope of eternal life. Our best, and our best at its best, can never be a sure

foundation for our souls to build upon. No, not if we had all Abraham's faith, and all Moses' meekness, and all David's penitence, and all Paul's spiritual-mindedness in one man. Nor can we ever plead our best services. Not if we could write Augustine's Confessions, and Luther's sermons, and Rutherford's Letters, and Bunyan's allegories, and all the Olney hymns to boot. Were all these things to meet in any one man he must, all the more, count all these things but loss that he may win CHRIST and be found in Him. He must, all the more, seek to have CHRIST made to him all his wisdom, and all his righteousness, and all his sanctification, and all his redemption.

Now, if none of these things, no nor all of them taken together, can ever secure our justification before God, what are our sure Gospel grounds, given us of God, for our souls to rest on? Well, as every one knows—in words, at any rate—the one and the only and the always sure ground on which our faith is to rest for the forgiveness of all our sins and for our full and final justification before God, is that Atonement for sin which the Son of God made and finished for ever on the Cross. The Cross of Christ alone speaks perfect peace to the guilty conscience. The Cross of Christ alone sheds abroad the love of God in the broken heart. 'My sin,' says Fraser, 'is such, and it has been such, and it will remain such, that its full wages would demand not only my death, but that death a thousand times told. And a thousand deaths of mine would still leave my scarlet sins unexpiated, and my raging conscience

unpropitiated. But "the blood of God," as Paul preached that blood to the elders of Ephesus who were old enough and exercised enough to receive it, the sin-atoning blood of very God Himself—that brings home to me my pardon and my acceptance and my peace with God as nothing else ever can. The Cross of Christ is the one Foundation laid in Zion. And it is such a Foundation that the chief of sinners, whoever he is, may safely build the house of his soul upon it, till all the rains that will ever descend, and all the winds that will ever blow, and all the storms that will ever beat, will only serve to discover how wise that man is who builds his house for life and for death and for the day of judgment on that Rock which is Christ; and especially, on that Rock which is Christ crucified.'

'The Cross! it takes our guilt away;
It holds the fainting spirit up:
It cheers with hope the gloomy day:
It sweetens every bitter cup.

It makes the coward spirit brave,
And nerves the feeble arm for fight;
It takes the terror from the grave,
And gilds the bed of death with light.

The balm of life, the cure of woe,
The measure and the pledge of love:
The sinner's refuge here below:
The angels' theme in heaven above.'

And, then, since the Son of God was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification, our author goes on to argue that our Saviour is able to save us to the uttermost. And

right noble, and right reassuring is the Gospel argument that he constructs on that apostolic Scripture. Are you the uttermost of all uttermost sinners? he asks his reader. Has no other man ever broken God's holy laws as you have broken them? Has no one else ever gone such lengths in sin as you have gone? Then it is to you, before all lesser sinners, that Christ comes with His salvation. Are you the most sensual-minded of all men? Are you the most malicious-minded of all men? Are you the most impenitent and the most prayerless of all men: the most God-forgetting and the most God-despising of all men? Nay, do all these evil things meet in you and possess you as they meet in and possess no other man? Well, so they met in and possessed Fraser, till he found a sure ground of faith and hope, even for him, in Christ's all-sufficiency for him: in His ability, and in His willingness, and in His preparedness to save even him to the uttermost.

When I draw near and look over Fraser's shoulder as he sits in his Bass Rock cell and writes with his Bible and his own heart both open before him, I read over his shoulder such remarkable passages of autobiographic homiletic as may be applied thus: The all-sufficiency of Christ is seen in this that He is able to supply out of His fulness all that the wickedest and the vilest and the most hopeless of men needs, in order to make him and on the spot a completely justified man. And, then, to make him at last the holiest of men. There is no guilt-

inflamed wound in any sinful man's conscience for which Christ has not a sufficient ointment; and there is no loathsome disease in any sinful man's heart for which He has not a sure and a certain cure. He who feels himself to be made of sin, and made of nothing but sin, like David, and Paul, and Andrewes, and Beveridge, it was with you in His eye that the Father laid all your help on one mighty to save: on one who is able to save to the uttermost; that is to say, who is able to save even you. You abhor yourself, and hate yourself, till you are sometimes on the point of seeking deliverance from yourself by self-destruction, like James Fraser, and John Bunyan, and Alexander Brodie, and William Cowper. But at that uttermost moment Christ comes in between you and your self-destruction, and He says to you that deliverance can never come to you in that direction. I am the only Way of deliverance for you, He says to you. Come to Me, and I will redeem you: I will wash you from all your awful sins in My own blood: I will heal you: I will clothe and adorn you: and I will not leave you till I have presented you faultless before my Father's presence in glory. Yes! Christ's is such an all-sufficiency that it answers to the uttermost, to the very uttermost. It answers to all our old guilt, and to all our new guilt; to all the sins of our youth, and to all the remains of the sin that still dwelleth and reigneth in us; to all the sin that still seethes and festers in us. There is an old proverb, says Fraser, to the effect that money answers all things. But there

is no money on earth like the unsearchable riches of Christ. For here is the payment of all your debts to the uttermost farthing. Here is abundant supply for every want and every necessity that presses upon you. Here is strength for all your weakness, and light for all your darkness, and support for all your crosses, and a garment of praise for all your heaviness of heart; ay, and in the end the most spotless holiness for all your corruption and depravity of heart. For if you will accept it at God's hand, of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who is made of God to you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and all that, till you are complete in Him.

Only, remember this; and always lay this to heart. This: that the prodigal son had to arise and leave the far country, and come to his father. He had to come to his father's house before all his nakedness and all his hunger and all his other miseries could be met, and he be satisfied, and made merry. And so must you arise and come to Christ. Even Christ, with all His all-sufficiency, cannot save you unless you come to Him to be saved. You will not come to Me that you may have life—so He accuses you and complains against you. Now, stop that accusation and that complaint of His on the spot. Come to Him now. Come to Him this moment. 'It was at a quarter to seven that I came,' writes John Wesley in his *Journal*. Come you to Him to-night at a quarter to eight. And then never leave Him. Never once leave Him. And if ever in the hour of temptation you are fool enough and madman

enough and suicide enough to leave Him for your besetting sin, return to Him again, as soon as it is over, as at the first. And He will receive you, as He received you at the first, and will not upbraid you, nor do anything else but comfort you and bless you.

The laird of Brea did not have our hymn-book on the Bass Rock. Else all the other prisoners would often have heard him singing: 'Just as I am, O Lamb of God, I come.' He could not help out his weak faith with that strong and sweet spiritual and evangelical song. But we have it, and we should sing it to Christ and to ourselves unceasingly. Speaking for myself, there is nothing that is oftener in my mouth and in my heart than just this so heartening hymn: 'Just as I am.' You know it? It is hymn one hundred and seventy-five in your hymn-book. Learn it all by heart, and say it with me continually. Say it and act it day and night, till it is written on every table in your heart, and till it is woven into every hour of your earthly life:

'Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God I come.

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.'

XXVII

'A LITTLE ARLES AS WELL AS MUCH'

UR old English word 'earnest' goes back to our old Scottish word 'arles.' And our old Scottish word arles goes back first to a Latin root, and then to a Greek root, and then to a Hebrew root. And in all these five languages both the word earnest and the word arles mean exactly the same thing. An earnest and an arles in all these five languages mean an instalment: that is to say, a small part of something given now in sure pledge of future full possession. In old days the men of business who made arrangements for the sale and the transfer of an estate were wont to take the buyer to the property for sale, where they dug a spadeful of the best soil, and gave it to him: or they plucked a head of the best corn and gave it to him: or they gathered a handful of the best fruit and gave it to him: they always gave him home with him a little of something that grew on the estate; something of the same kind as the estate that he was afterwards to possess. And that ceremony, so the lawyers said, gave the buyer an

incontestable right and an indisputable title to the whole promised property. And the reader of the Old Testament will remember that a bunch of grapes, which it took two men to carry, was brought to Moses from the vineyards of Eschol, as an earnest and an arles and an instalment of the full vintage of the Promised Land.

Now, I have been led into this vein of thought from having frequently come on this homely expression of an arles in the Memoirs of Fraser of Brea. For, comforting his own often dejected soul, and comforting the often dejected soul of his trusty correspondent, Thomas Ross of Tain, Fraser says, and he says it over and over and over again: 'A little,' he says, 'arles as well as much.' A single haunch of venison, he says, arles as well as ten head of highland deer. And a single cut of salmon arles as well as a mile of a Ross-shire river full of the same darting and glancing fish. And then the laird of Brea goes on to make the most evangelical and comforting application of this homely proverb to the waiting and expecting people of God. As I shall now try to do in far-off imitation of that much-experienced man of God, and great Gospel preacher.

Well, to begin with, and to begin at the very beginning: teach your son his English alphabet, and in that you have already given him an arles of the whole of our rich English literature. Present him with a copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress* on his birthday, and he has in that exquisite little gem an earnest and an arles of all the great English classics of grace and truth. Once truly and intelligently

interest him in his Shorter Catechism, and you have already apprenticed him to Augustine, and to Luther, and to Calvin, and to Goodwin, and to Edwards, and to Chalmers. And so on: through the first instalments of all truth and all grace: all noblest literature, and all genuine evangelical religion.

Now, on the same significant and suggestive principle of a little of something being a sure earnest and arles of more to come of the same kind, let me proceed to apply that homely proverb to the first beginnings of the life of grace in the renewed heart. And to begin with, I will take prayer. And I take prayer first because it is the most genuine earnest and the surest arles of the whole coming life of communion with God, both in grace and in glory. 'Behold, he prayeth!' was the first sign of his coming salvation in the case of the apostle Paul. And those first beginnings of secret prayer in his lodgings at Damascus were the earnest and the arles of a life of prayer the like of which the Church of Christ has never again seen. The heavenly richness and the surpassing splendour of Paul's apostolic prayers make them the completion and the crown of his incomparable apostolic preaching. The truth is Paul's magnificent doctrines of redemption and salvation come to all their fulness, and to all their finality, only in his glorious prayers for the Churches to which he wrote his greatest epistles. And that never-to-be-forgotten night of fasting and prayer after his arrest at the gate of Damascus: that night at the mercy-seat was the

true arles and the sure earnest of all that wonderful life of preaching and prayer which laid the foundations and built up the walls of the New Testament Church. And let the same thing once be said concerning any man among ourselves: let it once be said concerning him: 'Behold, he prayeth!' and no limit can be set to what that man will yet attain in the victories, and in the experiences, and in the services of the Christian life.

'Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.'

A very little faith also; a very little Scriptural faith earnests and arles a full and a fruitful life of faith. A very little realisation; a very little apprehension of what we read, or of what is read to us of the Word of God; a very little opening of the eye of the soul upon the great realities of the spiritual and eternal world; a very little upgoing of the soul to Jesus Christ in true trust and in true love; even a single mustard seed of such faith if it is quickened and watered and shone upon by the Holy Ghost, will in the end become a widespreading tree of life, bearing all the fruits of the Spirit in their season. Even one recollection concerning Jesus Christ in a day; even one glance of the eye in His direction in a day; even one ejaculation in a day, shot up towards Him who is not seen as yet; little as all that looks, little as all that is, at the same time despise it not, for eternal life is in it.

No. Despise it not, nor despair of it. For it is the earnest and the arles of a faith that will yet both justify the ungodly and sanctify the sinful; and once born, it will never die, till it ends in eternal life. No. Emphatically no! Despise it not, and despair not of it. For as the oak-tree is hidden in the acorn, and as the full-grown man is hidden in the new-born babe, so is all the life of grace here and all the life of glory hereafter hidden in the smallest arles of that faith which is the gift of God and the operation of the Holy Ghost.

But this homely little proverb is almost more true of the first awakenings of love toward God and our neighbour. Self-love, as we well remember, to our shame and pain, at one time swallowed up every thought, and every desire, and every affection of our unrenewed hearts. But on the other hand we are divinely assured that the faintest stirring of a self-forgetting and a self-denying love to God, and much more to any of our everyday neighbours, is a sure token that God Himself is beginning to take up His abode in our souls. For 'God is love: and he that loveth dwelleth in God, and God in him.' A little humility, then; a little meekness; a little lowly-mindedness; a little self-denial; a little self-surrender; a little patience; a little forbearance; a little silence to let another man speak; a little deference to another man's mind; a little honour to another man's good name; despise it not; destroy it not; for, small and despised as it is, very God Himself is in it and is at the root of it. And thus it was that our Lord made so much of the

widow's mite of love at the church door, and of the cottager's cup of love to a thirsty passer-by.

And, then, take that peace with God which your guilty conscience cries for so much, and seeks after so much. Now is not this a fact of your everyday experience that you no sooner again read or hear of Christ as your peace with God that your conscience is not quieted somewhat and your heart is not somewhat comforted? You never once kneel down before God in the name of Christ that you do not enter, on the spot, a little into peace and acceptance. And even a little quieting of a fearful heart; even a momentary pacification of an always accusing conscience; even a gentle whisper of that peace which passes all understanding is a sure earnest and a sufficient arles of that day when you shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted and accepted in the Beloved. Even a drop a day, so to say, of the peace-speaking blood of Christ will speak a sufficient peace to enable you to lift up your head somewhat, from day to day, and from hour to hour, till your purchased redemption is fully accomplished in you. And till you shall be ushered into your assured inheritance of joy and peace; an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, which is reserved in heaven for you. Yes, reserved in heaven for you!

But my brethren to tell you the truth, the apostle's doctrine concerning the earnest of our inheritance is such a high doctrine, it is such a holy and heavenly doctrine, that I shrink back from preaching it fully to you; just as you will

shrink back from fully hearing it, and from fully accepting it. I preach, and you hear; and, in a way, we all follow after prayer, and faith, and love, and peace with God; but who among us is ready to receive home into his heart the very Holy Ghost Himself? And yet that, and nothing less than that, is the full Gospel of our salvation, as our salvation is set before us in this sweetest and sublimest of all Paul's epistles. My brethren, as I have said, this 'earnest' of our future inheritance is so great; I will even say it is so awful; I will even say it is so terrible, almost, to such earthly-minded, carnal-minded, mean-minded, and unspiritual men as we are, and are to the end, that we shrink back from the very thought of it. And, yet, so it is, and so it must be. And less it cannot be. For after Paul has preached it and after we have well reflected on it we are compelled to confess that nothing other, and nothing less, than God, the Holy Ghost Himself, dwelling in our souls, can be a real, and a sure, and a sufficient earnest of such an inheritance as heaven is to be.

For, take prayer, take faith, take love, take peace with God and our neighbour, take all the holiness that even Paul himself ever attained to, and after all they are only real and sure earnests of heaven so far as the Holy Ghost Himself is in us and in them. They are all but the result of His operations in our souls, and He does not operate but where He first dwells. He does not operate in our souls in His own absence from our souls. Take an instance or two so as to make this clear. Does the reading of

the Holy Scriptures captivate our hearts and carry us up to heaven as often as we open them? Yes. But then what are the Holy Scriptures, and whence came they, and whence comes their captivating and sanctifying power? All this is so because the Holy Scriptures are the workmanship of the Holy Ghost, and because he enters our hearts, and operates in our hearts, as often as we open the Word of God. Again, what is the Sabbath day but a sanctified spot of our secular time, marked off and circumscribed by the Holy Ghost, and made an earnest of the rest that remaineth to all them who in the Spirit remember the Day of their Lord's Resurrection to keep it holy for His sake and for His service? And what is the Lord's Supper, to which ordinance we are again looking forward, what is it but an earnest and a foretaste of the marriage supper of the Lamb when the Holy Ghost shall come forward and present the Lamb's wife to her Husband, holy and without blemish, as His finished indwelling and finished workmanship?

No! do not shrink back from the New Testament doctrine and offer of the Holy Ghost. Do not be afraid to receive such a heavenly Dweller into your deepest hearts. For He comes not to do you any damage. He comes to renew you. He comes to quicken you. He comes to sanctify you. He comes to comfort you. He comes to make you meet for your heavenly inheritance. He comes to be in you and to you 'the sure and certain earnest of your inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.'

Now, you will allow me a reflection or two upon all this, and then I will close. And my first and my best reflection upon all this concerns our Blessed Lord Himself. We know, and we never forget, that our Blessed Lord, all His days on earth, lived by prayer, and by faith, and by hope, and by love to God and man, and by all holy obedience, and by continual communion with His Father. But all that was to Him only the earnest and the arles of the fulness of the heavenly life which awaited Him in heaven when His work on earth was finished. Every sin He pardoned; every disease He healed; every disciple He restored; every devil he cast out—what were all those mighty works of His but so many earnests and arles of that coming Day when all power in heaven and on earth would be put into His hands? Even in His most successful sermons He had but one convert here, and another there. Nathanael under the fig-tree; Nicodemus by night; the woman at the well; Zacchæus the publican; Mary Magdalene; the Syrophœnician woman; the thief on the cross; one of a city, and two of a family. 'Then I said: I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain. But thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, to Him whom man despiseth, In an acceptable time have I heard Thee; and in a day of salvation shall I help Thee; and I will preserve Thee, and will give Thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, and to cause to inherit the desolate heritages. Behold, these shall come from far; and, lo, these from the north and from the

west; and these from the land of Sinim.' But, all the same, all His earthly life He had to content Himself with one disciple here, and another there; till, now, they are a multitude that no man can number.

And here let all faithful Gospel preachers take heart of faith and hope. Let them not mourn too much and blame themselves too much, and say, Who hath believed our report? Let them rather say: All that the Father giveth them shall come to them. And, meantime, let them say: It is enough that the disciple be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. It is enough that it be as God wills it to be. A sinner converted here, and a saint comforted there; a mind enlightened here, and a conscience cleansed there; a child taught the first elements of the faith here, and a dying believer assisted over the Jordan there; that, and even less than that, is the whole earnest and the sole arles of many a true preacher of Jesus Christ. Like his Master, many a minister, many a missionary, many a Sabbath-School teacher, many a heart-burdened parent, who sows in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless, come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

And a special reflection for all godly parents comes in here, and it is this. When you see anything in any child of yours, or of your neighbour's, that seems to you to arle him for the heavenly inheritance, rejoice over that; with a holy and a heavenly joy rejoice over that. It may not be

much as yet. It cannot, in the nature of things, be very much as yet. But 'a little arles as well as much.' A little, if it grows, and if you see it growing, arles as well as much. A little true reverence and honour toward yourself, little as you feel you deserve it; a little and a growing teachableness, and, especially, in divine truth; a little love for good books, and for the best of all books; a little, and an ever-growing interest in the Church of Christ, and in the Kingdom of God; a little feature here, and another little feature there, of the divine family; dwell much, and with much secret prayer and praise on these first beginnings of the everlasting life in your child. And seek above all other seeking in his behalf, seek that these earnests and arles of the Kingdom of Heaven may be multiplied upon him. Copy Paul's prayer for the parents and the children of Ephesus, and make it your constant prayer for yourself, and for all your children: 'I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that you and your children with you may all be sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.'

And, then, take home with you this reflection for your individual selves. If your earnests and arles of heaven—that is to say, if your spiritual holiness of heart and life is so sinfully small as to seem to be no earnests and no arles at all—take this comfort from John Calvin which has been the comfort of so many. The great evangelical reformer always

said that a true desire to be holy is our best and our fullest holiness here. Now, you have that true desire, have you not? Yes, I am sure you have! For, were you to be told from heaven, and where you now sit, to ask one thing for yourself this Sabbath evening, it would be to be holy as your Father in heaven is holy; it would be to be holy as His best saints on earth and in heaven are holy. You would subscribe to Thomas Boston's protestation that the Holy Spirit is welcome to make a clean sweep—a bonfire, I think, he calls it—of all your sins of body, and soul, and spirit; and that, this very night, if He sees that to be best for the glory of God, and for your full and final salvation. Well, take a true desire to be holy along with Paul, and with Calvin, and with Boston; take a true desire after holiness to be a sure earnest and a true arles in your souls, until the redemption of your purchased possession; which redemption, to not a few of you, is at your very door!

XXVIII

'I WILL STAND UPON MY WATCH, AND WILL SET ME UPON MY TOWER, AND WILL WATCH TO SEE WHAT HE WILL SAY TO ME, AND WHAT I SHALL ANSWER WHEN I AM REPROVED'

'GREAT,' says Ewald, 'as the prophet Habakkuk is in intellect and in inspired thought, he is no less great in literary skill. Habakkuk is master of a very beautiful Hebrew style. His descriptions of Israel and of Chaldea are most powerful pieces of prophetic literature. Indeed, this prophet has an artistic talent which is all his own—an artistic talent that orders and arranges everything with the most captivating effect. We admire in Habakkuk the genuine type and the full beauty of the best Hebrew prophecy.'

So far Ewald, our greatest authority on the prophets of Israel. But nowhere in all his book is Habakkuk more suggestive or more impressive or more powerful than just in the text. How many

men of prayer both in ancient Israel and in our own land have been arrested and directed and encouraged by these so striking and so instructing words of his: 'I will stand upon my watch, and will set me upon my tower, and will watch to see what He will say to me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.'

Now as it so happens, closely connected with this so pictorial and so impressive passage is the recorded confession of James Fraser, that true Habakkuk in our own Israel. 'I came to see,' says that spiritual son of Habakkuk in our own covenanted Church and country: 'I came to see that the answers to my prayers were all but thrown away upon me, and that was so because I did not wait enough and watch enough for God's answers to my prayers.' Now I will take some lessons this evening both from this Hebrew prophet and from this Scottish preacher so that we may all learn the better how to pray, and especially that we may all learn the better how to behave ourselves before God immediately after our times of special prayer to Him; how to bear ourselves and how to behave ourselves so that the answers to our prayers, when they come, may not be wholly thrown away upon us.

'I came to see,' says Fraser, 'that the answers to my prayers were all but thrown away upon me.' And that was so because all his prayers at one time were so many *opera operata*, as he had been wont to accuse the Papists and the curates concerning all their religious exercises and all their devotional

duties. But the inbred Popery of his own heart was at last laid bare to him when he was made to see and to confess his own mockery of prayer in kneeling down for a few seconds at his bedside and then going to sleep with a quiet conscience, till he awoke and went through the same operatic performance the next morning. For even had it been possible that any answer could have come from God to any such travesties of prayer as these prayers of his, he came to see that the answer would have been but thrown away upon him. And that was so, because he neither deserved an answer to such operatic prayers as these, nor did he, as a matter of fact, expect an answer, nor would he have recognised the answer even had it come to him. But the Hearer of prayer had mercy on that unspiritual and self-deceived Pharisee of ours. For he tells us, in his *Memoirs* of Himself, how God at last taught him to imitate David, who always, after every earnest prayer of his, looked up and expected an answer all that day. As also to imitate Habakkuk, who took his stand upon his watch, and set himself upon his tower, till he should see what the Lord would say to him after his prayer.

Again, the answers to this man's prayers were sometimes quite thrown away upon him in this way. There had been seasons in his past life when he had simply besieged the mercy-seat day and night with all his passionateness and with all his importunity for some greatly desired and continually demanded thing. But by degrees his circum-

stances, and with them his feelings, became so completely changed that the passion and the importunity largely passed away from his prayer. So that when God's time came to send the answer, behold, the praying man was gone away a thousand miles from the intensity and the importunity that had moved God to send the answer. And thus it was that the answer, which at one time would have been received as a never-to-be-forgotten miracle of God's goodness, that same answer had now little or no attention paid to it. In his own words, that answer was now 'as good as thrown away upon him.' Now, is your experience in your life of prayer at all like that? For if that is at all your experience, then there are some Scriptures that are written for your special instruction and imitation. As for instance this psalm of David: 'Unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For Thou art the God of my salvation, and on Thee do I wait all the day.' Or, as it is in the still more excellent metre:—

> 'For Thou art God that dost
> To me salvation send;
> And I, upon Thee all the day,
> Expecting, do attend.'

Build you a tower of expectancy also, like Habakkuk. 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.'

But if God's answer comes to you so late that

you are now all but wholly oblivious of it, and are all but wholly indifferent to it, still let not all that keep you from receiving the answer as God's undoubted reply to all your former prayers. When the answer does come carry your memory back to those days and nights of prayer for this very answer till you are able to take the answer from God's own hand, and that with something of the wonder and with something of the praise that you owe to God at all times. For this wonder and this praise, remember, are very acceptable with God at your hands. And this will recover all your lost relations of fellowship and communion with God: that fellowship and that communion of which all your prayers and all His answers are but the partial and the wholly inadequate expression.

A great authority on prayer says to us that the modifications, and the permutations, and the transmutations that God's answers must, in the nature of things, often undergo—that is one great reason why so many of God's answers to our prayers are so thrown away upon us; and that great authority has this striking illustration of his meaning. A home merchant has a trusty agent in a foreign land, and the home merchant sends out advices and orders to his correspondent continually—advices and orders instructing him how to buy, and how to sell, and how to make investments in this and in that commodity in which the home house deals; and, as a rule, the distant agent simply carries out his home instructions to the letter. But a sudden crisis occurs in the foreign market—a sudden crisis

that the home merchant could not foresee, and therefore could not possibly send out the proper instructions for the sudden emergency. Instead of that, he has just sent out, and with the very last mail, the most urgent orders that the largest and the most immediate purchases and shipments are to be made of the foreign goods in which our home merchant deals. But the agent is on the spot, and he uses his own discretion, and he acts on his own responsibility; and accordingly, in this new crisis, he at once sets aside the home orders, and makes great purchases and immediate shipments of a kind of goods that were not ordered, but which, in the event, bring the greatest profit to that mercantile house. Such, indeed, is the ability and the wisdom of the foreign agent in this whole transaction that he is immediately promoted to a high place in the home house, to its daily enriching and to his high honour. The whole story is a bold but a true parable of the kingdom of heaven. You are the home merchant, and, with reverence be it said, Almighty God is your foreign agent, who knows infinitely better than you do when your prayers are to be answered to the letter, and when they are to be transmuted and modified to something of which you had no knowledge, till He has so enriched you by His adaptations and His transmutations of your prayers that you henceforth make Him the Predominant Partner in all your undertakings, and till nothing of yours is transacted at home or abroad, on earth or in heaven, without His having the last word and the casting vote. Will you, then, issue

all your future orders and offer all your future prayers, after this, in instant and in complete submission to Him who has the insight and the foresight, and who has far more at stake in all your transactions and enterprises than you can possibly have? Now, will you do this? For no earthly merchant is so mulish as to repudiate or to be offended at the foreign transactions that have ended in making him a millionaire. Only, the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

But by far the most enriching of all possible permutations and transformations of your prayers is in that case when you pray with all your passionateness and with all your importunity that God would give you some of His creatures to possess, and when, instead of any of His creatures, He gives you Himself in everlasting possession. He does not give you what you ask. Why, do you think? Because He has it in His eternal purpose to give you what it would never have entered into your highest imagination or ambition to ask—that is, Himself, very God Himself. In your so passionate and so importunate prayers you are often like young Saul, the son of Kish. That young farmer went out, you remember, to seek for some cattle that had strayed from his father's fields, but, as God would have it, Saul came back with the crown of Israel upon his head. And you will come back from all your unanswered and from all your permuted prayers with a grace and a glory on your head that will far outshine all the crowns of this

world. That was Asaph's experience, which he has recorded, for our encouragement, in his splendid psalm. His feet had almost gone and his steps had wellnigh slipped among his passionate questionings and among his unanswered prayers. 'So foolish was I, and ignorant,' he tells us, 'I was as a beast before God. Nevertheless, now, whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.' And our own prophet has the same experience in this perfect expression of it: 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines: the labour of the olive fail, and the fields shall yield no meat: the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.' My brethren, if God is, and if He is what He is, then there is no possible answer to your prayers for one moment to compare with this—that, in exchange for all else, He gives you God Himself.

Again, there are continually recurring occasions when the answers to our prayers are as good as thrown away upon us, because God answers us through the agency of second causes, as the school calls them. Such is the inborn ungodliness and such is the inveterate blindness and unbelief of our hearts that, if God sends His answers to us—as in 99 cases out of every 100 He does, as in 999 cases out of every 1000 He does—by the agency of

His daily providences, as we call them, we shut our eyes and refuse to see Him in the answer at all. We speak of everyday providences, and we belittle God's immediate presence and His direct dealings with us in so speaking and in so thinking. For there are no everyday providences in the intimate and secret life of God and His children. You would not take it well at their hands if your children saw only the servants who brought them your good gifts and never acknowledged those good gifts by word or by look to yourselves. No, there are no second causes nor intervening servants in the household life of God and His loved and loving children. To the Son of God every drop of the early and the latter rain, and every ray of the summer sun, every morsel of bread He ate, and every drop of water He drank, came into His hand directly and immediately from His Father's hand. And no little part of His teaching and preaching and example was to train and to practise His disciples into the same sonship mind and heart. 'Give us,' He taught them to say, 'our daily bread.' No, there were no such things as second causes to Him who walked with His Father till He lived, and moved, and had all His being in His Father. Second causes are among the 'idols,' as Bacon has it, of the unbelieving and unfilial heart. Second causes have their own uses for the purposes of our logic and our science; but they are an intrusion and an impertinence when they come in between the Hearer of prayer and His praying and expecting people. Watch then,

and among the daily providences and the second causes of every day and every hour, unveil and disentangle your God and Father Himself from among them, till you are able to say every day and every hour: Lo! this, and this, and this is my God and my Father! Lo! I have waited for Him, and I will rejoice and will be glad in this His secret and immediate answer to my prayer!

But such and so spiritual is the life of prayer that there is a much more serious misunderstanding and mistake made sometimes than any of those misunderstandings and mistakes that have just been mentioned. And that is a mistake which many of our best men are making every day. God's very best answer to their very best prayer is being thrown away on many of our very best men in this way. For years past they have been concentrating their prayers upon the Holy Ghost. As a great spiritual writer has it, they have given over every other life but the spiritual life. And thus, instead of the thousand things they at one time prayed for, they now ask but for one thing continually, and that one thing is the Holy Ghost, and their own true sanctification through His indwelling and through His spiritual operations. And their one perplexity now, both with God and with their own souls, is because with all their prayers for the Holy Ghost they are nothing better in their spiritual life, but are rather becoming worse. But stop! stop sir! and let us reason together for a moment on this great matter. Are you quite sure that in this you are not just another instance of the answer

being thrown away upon you? Are you quite sure that the Holy Ghost has not been often and often given to you? In what way, and with what manifestation, did you expect Him to come to you? Did you expect Him to descend from heaven like a dove upon you when you were walking alone by your holiday riverside? Or did you look for Him to come and rest upon your head in your pew in this church like one of those flames of fire in the upper room at Pentecost? For His own special reasons He came in those visible manifestations in those early days. But all such times and seasons and manifestations of Himself are in the Spirit's own power and wisdom. But this is the point: Are you quite sure that the Holy Ghost has not come into your heart and into your life often, and even this very day? Say what you will, in your unbelief and ingratitude, we will not believe you. We will rather say that the Holy Ghost has been thrown away upon you; that is to say, so far as your recognition of Him, and your enjoyment of Him, and your gratitude for Him are all concerned. But the answer has by no means been thrown away upon you, so far as your true and sure sanctification is concerned. 'By their fruits you shall know them,' said One whose words are true and sure. Well, we all know you. All who know you see and acknowledge the answer that you will not believe you have received. We see it every day in you, and there is scarcely a day that we do not congratulate one another about you. For one thing, we say to one another behind your back that you

are not any longer such a proverb of self and of self-seeking as you once were. You are not so proud, nor so haughty, nor so hateful to all men as you once were. Your voice is not so often heard beating down all other men as it once was. You take a reproof and a correction from us as you once did not. He is not your enemy now who tells you the truth, as he once was. Again, you give now before you are asked to give. You give till we have to defend you from those who continually surround your door. And not your money only, but you give yourself, good measure, pressed down, and running over. Again, we often remark it in private and in public that when men smite you on one cheek you turn to them the other also. And whoever compels you to go a mile with him, you go with him twain. And all the time your left hand does not know what your right hand is doing. In short, if the fruits of the Spirit are love, and peace, and longsuffering, and gentleness, and humility, and meekness, and easiness to live with in all things and at all times, then, if these things are not in you and abound, we do not know where else to look for them in this world. To speak plainly, you are an extreme and a very blameworthy case of having the best of answers poured out upon you till it is quite thrown away upon you. Open your eyes and mend your ways, and admit and acknowledge that God has not withheld His Holy Spirit from you when you asked for Him with your whole heart.

But there is a previous question to all that. And I would be a timid friend to the truth—nay, I

would be a false friend to the truth and a false friend to your immortal souls—if I did not wind up all this by warning you that there is a previous question to all that. And it is a previous question of the most tremendous importance to you, and of the most commanding urgency to you; to some of you; I fear to not a few of you. And that previous question is this: Do you ever pray at all? Do you ever pray at all to be called prayer? Do you ever give the Hearer of prayer an opportunity worth speaking about of answering you? Have you ever received, and into your mind and into your heart, these words, directly addressed to you by your Saviour: Ask, and it shall be given you? Begin to ask aright to-day; and always after this, as soon as you have asked for anything whatsoever, always say to yourself with the prophet Habakkuk: 'I will now stand upon my watch, and will set me upon my tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; and though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry.'

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